

# etc.

magazine

**RAISING TEDDY**  
Challenges of Parenting  
an Autistic Child

**WHAT ABOUT MS. BOB?**  
A Teacher Who Transcends  
Transgender Stereotypes

**ON THE BORDER**  
Of Life and Death

**BACK  
FROM THE  
FRONT**  
A MARINE'S MEMORIES OF IRAQ







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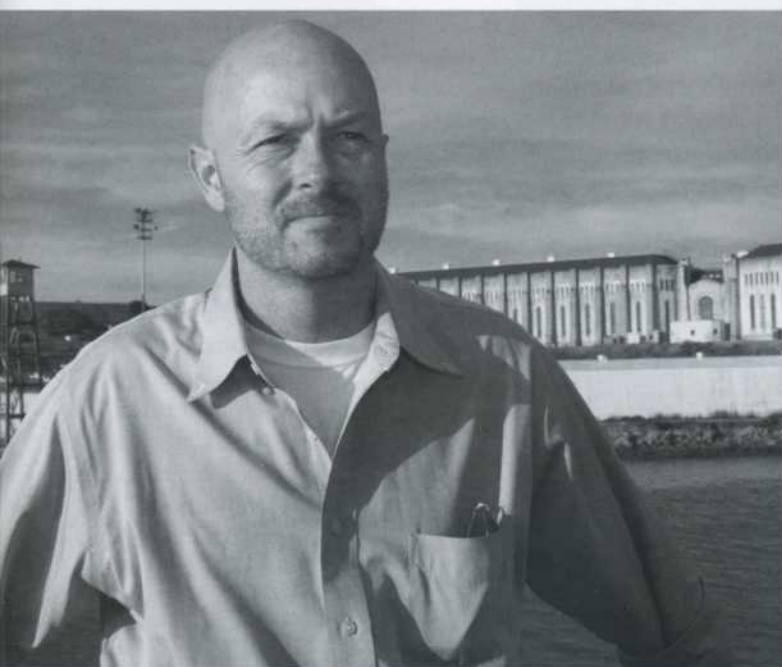
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JOUR 19	Contemporary News Media			
	MWF 9:00-10:00 am	Ocean	Gonzales	
	T 6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Graham	
JOUR 21	News Writing and Reporting			
	MWF 10:00-11:00 am	Ocean	Gonzales	
	T 6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Rochmis	
JOUR 22	Feature Writing			
	W 6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Graham	
	R 6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Rochmis	
JOUR 23	Electronic Copy Editing			
	W 6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Rochmis	
JOUR 24	Newspaper Laboratory			
	MWF 12:00-1:00 pm	Ocean	Gonzales	
	Plus 4 hours lab by arrangement			
JOUR 25	Editorial Management			
	MWF 1:00-2:00 pm	Ocean	Gonzales	
JOUR 29	Magazine Editing & Production			
	M 6:30-8:30 pm	Mission	Graham	
	Plus 3 hours lab by arrangement			
JOUR 31	Internship Experience			
	Hours Arranged	Ocean	Gonzales	
JOUR 37	Intro to Photojournalism			
	W 6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Lifland	

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PHOTOGRAPH by Michael P. Smith

ABOVE: MICHAEL CONDIFF, CO-EDITOR OF ETC. Magazine, stands outside of San Quentin State Prison where he was once incarcerated.

## { letter to the editor }

### Casino Bandit's favorable online review

**Editor:** I wanted to point out a solid piece of writing you may have missed over the summer, and, to be honest with you, this isn't so much a review as a nod of the head in the direction of a piece that impressed me.

The piece is "Confessions of a Casino Bandit" by Michael Condiff [which originally appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of Etc. Magazine]; it is CrimeWav.com's 40th podcast, and what makes it truly unique is that not only is it an original, first-run recording, but also that every word Mr. Condiff is reading is 100 percent true. "Casino Bandit" is probably one of the most effective and haunting podcasts CrimeWav has ever run, so if you're a fan of writers like Ed Bunker or Jean Genet, make sure to check it out.

*Keith Rawson, Arizona*

# etc. magazine

This magazine is written, edited, designed, and produced by journalism students at City College of San Francisco.

## { note from the editor }

### A look inside this issue...

The anticipation of change can be more unnerving than change itself. So it was with this issue of Etc. magazine.

At semester's start, we were faced with more than a 90 percent turnover in staff. Just two faces were returning from the Spring 2009 issue and the efforts of more than 20 are needed to put the magazine together. Apprehension was thick in the air.

It diluted quickly. In the pages that follow, you will discover why.

This issue of Etc. brings you fresh styles, outlooks, visions and voices – but all of the powerful content and imagery that has made this magazine a Journalism Association of Community Colleges General Excellence Award winner for five consecutive years. We have every confidence that streak will continue in 2010.

In fact, we like this issue so much, we gave it two covers – one introducing Dylan Gunther's first-person account of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the other Molly Oleson's profile of City College's transgender music teacher, Ms. Bob.

Inside, you'll find reflections on the lives of two City College legends: printer Bob Pinetti and the late Burl Toler. You'll be treated to a glimpse inside the amazing art of Ming Ren and discover how author Seth Harwood found his audience off the traditional path. Through Susan Boeckmann's words and photos, you'll get a perspective on what it's like to raise an autistic child. And, with lives in the balance, you'll take a humanitarian trek through the Sonoran Desert.

So turn the page and enjoy the journey.  
We certainly have.

Michael Condiff, co-editor



# { masthead }

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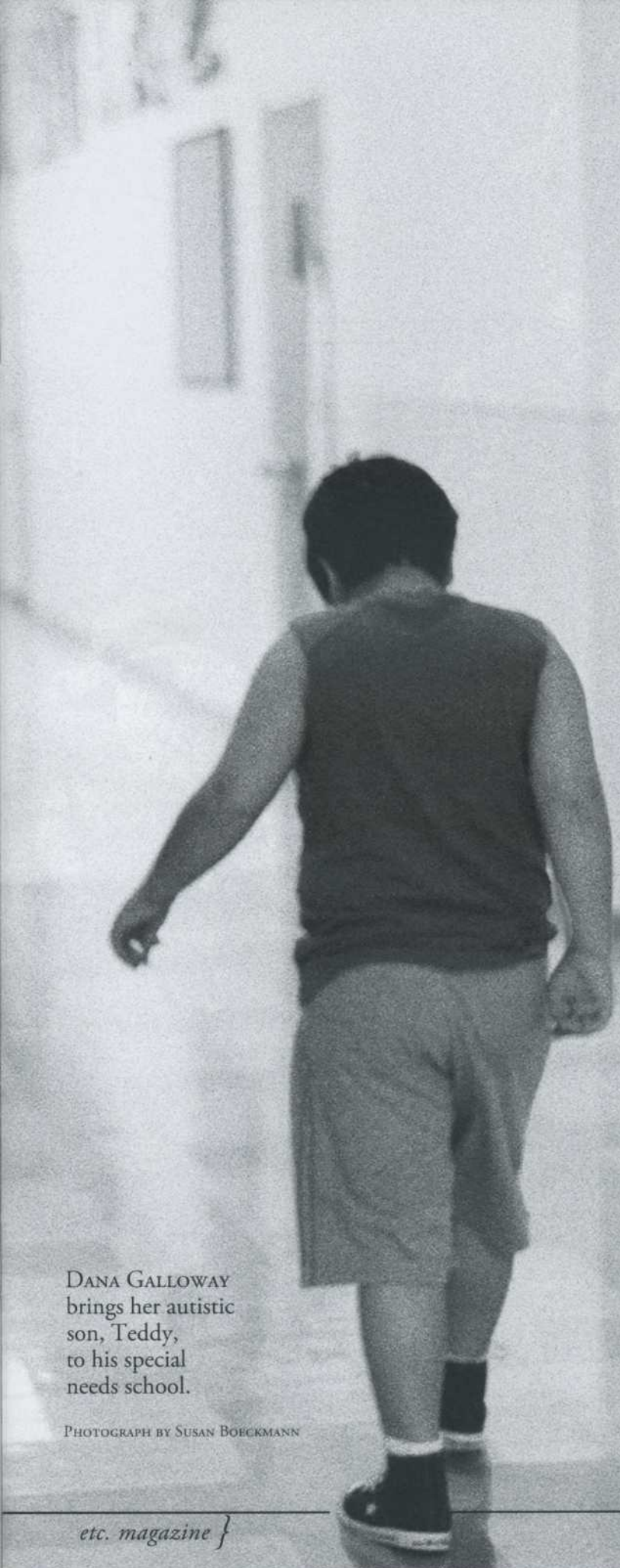
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COVER: DYLAN GUNTHER DISPLAYS A PHOTOGRAPH of himself (left) and a friend in Kuwait before the start of the Iraq War.

BACK COVER: MS. BOB, A TRANSGENDER TEACHER, applies lipstick in a new gender-neutral bathroom on campus.

FRONT AND BACK COVER PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZACH HUDSON

DANA GALLOWAY brings her autistic son, Teddy, to his special needs school.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSAN BOECKMANN





JosseLine Janiletha Hernandez Quinteros

"Cuando sientes que el camino se te ha  
vuelto duro y difícil, Dios te des para vencerlo y  
sigue adelante, y bas en la ayuda de Dios"  
Te llevaremos siempre en oración



# On the Border OF LIFE AND DEATH

By Sarah McDonald

The desert is quiet, but we are not alone. Vivian, Claire and I are surrounded by tall grass and brambles. I never knew the desert could be so green. It's the heart of monsoon season, the one time of year the land springs to life. Two U.S. Border Patrol trucks drive past, slowly. As we hike over a sloping hill, I hear a woman's voice. Vivian says she heard someone cough. We stop, and call out:

“¡Amigas y amigos! ¡Somos voluntarios de un grupo humanitaria! ¡Tenemos agua, comida, y atención médica! ¡Gritas si necesita ayuda!” (Friends! We are volunteers with a humanitarian aid group! We have water, food, and medical attention! Yell if you need help!)

Silence. We leave jugs of water next to a bush, along with cans of food and clean socks, and move on.

More than 2,000 people have died in the Sonoran desert since 1998 trying to cross the border from Mexico to the United States. In August, I spent a week there with the humanitarian aid group No More Deaths, trying to help alleviate these unnecessary casualties.

I went to the border with a group of activist friends from SF Pride at Work, a queer social and economic justice volunteer organization. Normally, we do migrant rights work defending the city's Sanctuary City status for undocumented residents. In a city like San Francisco, many of us are migrants, particularly in the queer community. The difference is some people are criminalized because of borders they crossed to come here.

Our plan is to leave water and food along trails frequented by migrants. We hike for miles, looking for people in trouble – sick, injured, possibly dying. Each group has a Spanish speaker and a medic – EMTs, med students, or other volunteers with medical training. We carry “migrant packs,” collections of food, water, and socks to give to anyone we find.

Our group arrives in Tucson for training on Saturday. We talk about the history of the border, and humanitarian aid in Arizona. Empty as they might look during the day, the trails we will be hiking are practically international freeways, foot paths traveled by many of the half million people estimated to enter the U.S. illegally every year. Until the mid-90s, most crossed in

urban areas, near border towns like San Diego and El Paso. The “Southwest Border Strategy” changed that. In 1994, the U.S. shut down traditional crossing points by concentrating huge numbers of Border Patrol agents in these areas. They assumed migration would shift to remote areas, where “natural barriers” – the Rio Grande River, the Cuyamaca and Laguna mountains near San Diego, and the deadly Sonoran Desert – would deter illegal entry.

The policy had deadly results. Bodies dotted the landscape, killed by exposure – heat stroke, thirst, hyperthermia. Recorded border crossing deaths doubled between 1995 and 2005. And that's only the people they found. Between scavengers and the blistering sun, corpses don't last long here.

Gene LaFebure, a co-founder of No More Deaths, spoke at our training and accompanied us to camp. A retired Presbyterian minister from Tucson, he became aware of what was happening on the border when “people started dying in our backyards.”

LaFebure helped found No More Deaths in 2003. Their camp lies in the heart of the desert, about 10 miles North of Mexico. Smugglers drop migrants off just south of the border, a 4-day walk from their destination past Border Patrol checkpoints. It's impossible to carry enough water for the trip. Some people find water bottles, others drink from cattle troughs that make them sick. We assume anybody we find is dehydrated, and probably suffering heat stroke and exhaustion. People also get injured. Days of walking in cheap shoes and wet socks leave them with severe blisters. Their “coyotes,” or guides, leave them if they can't keep up. And that's where trouble starts. Crossing the desert, when you're healthy and know your way, is dangerous. Crossing alone is impossible. Unless you find help, or help finds you, you'll die.


Monsoon rains assault the windshield as we drive south on I-19, pulling into a little Arizona border town called Arivaca. We park our cars at the Red Rooster Inn, a red building that looks like a barn. A battered pickup truck and Suburban arrive to take us the rest of the way. The heat isn't bad yet, thanks to the rain. Red and black ants carpet the ground, and a bright green and yellow grasshopper sits on the windshield. They're everywhere out here.

A dozen volunteers from California, Massachusetts, Illinois, and New Jersey are bumping up and down in their seats. What they call a road here is a wide trail of hard-packed sand and rock. Forty-five minutes later we reach camp, a mass of tents and tarps next to a huge stack of water jugs. Chairs and crates form a circle next to the kitchen tent. Protected from the sun

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JOSSLINE QUINTEROS, A 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL from El Salvador, died while crossing the border. Someone dumped a can of beans over her shrine in the Sonoran Desert.





by a tarp, some freestanding cots provide a sleeping space for people who didn't bring tents. A medic tent sits next to the kitchen, and an RV serves as an office. A long trail leads to this year's latest improvement to the camp, a toilet chair positioned over a bucket.

There are 20 volunteers, most of whom are church activists or queers like us. That night, alone in my tent, I think about the people who are moving now, all around us, and wonder what tomorrow might bring.

We wake around 5 a.m. to the bellowing of cattle and howling coyotes. Our trainer gives us a mini-course in GPS navigation, so we don't get lost on the trail.

That afternoon we pile into the Suburban and drive to four water drops programmed into the GPS. Finding them is tricky, since they're hidden off-road. At one drop, migrants had consumed three dozen 1-gallon jugs that had been left for them. We spend half an hour walking back and forth from the car, replenishing them. Later, we break into smaller groups. Two women and I hike through a canyon lined with long-stemmed Desert Spoon bushes. The terrain is so desolate that any sign of life stands out – a sock, bottle caps, a backpack. Every few feet Sofia announces loudly in Spanish who we are and why we're here. Then we stop and listen.

There are shoe prints on the trail. Tuesday morning, at an abandoned resting area, we find clothes, empty water bottles and food containers everywhere. A pair of jeans hangs in a tree to dry, as though their inhabitant is coming back to claim them. We call out, but nobody calls back.

In training, they told us to say "somos de la iglesia," or "we are from the church." Many migrants trust the church. My friend Wendy finds another way to say it:

"¡Somos homosexuales de la iglesia!"

I wonder if any of them will make it to the United States. Or if they'd remember the homos from the church who left them water on the trail.

We don't see anyone. Experienced volunteers say some weeks they see people every day; some weeks they don't. They think it's because of the moon. Most migrants walk at night to hide from the Border Patrol. During a full moon, the desert shines so bright you can see your shadow. The moon is just a sliver, but it's waxing. I wonder if we'll see more people toward the end of the week. Meanwhile, it's ghostly quiet.

On Wednesday, I visit Josseline Hernandez Quinteros' shrine. Her story is haunting. Josseline was a 14-year-old girl from El Salvador who died crossing the border in February, trying to join her parents in the U.S. She and her little brother got sick from a can of bad tuna while crossing with a group. Both were too sick to keep up, but her brother was small enough

A VOLUNTEER LOOKS AT THE BORDER WALL IN THE Sonoran Desert, where more than 2,000 people have died since 1998 while trying to reach the United States.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF No More Deaths



{ Crossing the desert alone is impossible. Unless  
you find help, or help finds you, you'll die. }

to be carried. Her family notified humanitarian groups that she was missing after her brother reached the United States. Volunteers from No More Deaths found her, but not in time. She had wandered the desert alone for a week before she died.

After several water drops and a hike, we stop by her shrine. Her picture hangs from a tree, behind a small cross bearing her name. Writing adorns a plaque that is too dirty to read, even if I knew Spanish. Yesterday's patrol had left 12 water jugs.

As I approach, something doesn't seem right. The shrine has been desecrated. The cross is covered with black beans, an empty can lies next to it. The water jugs have been slashed. They're empty. The words "¡Suerte!" or "Good luck!" that we had written are crossed out.

We're not the only Americans here. Others come, not to save lives but to keep people from crossing illegally. Minutemen, self-proclaimed vigilantes, sometimes sit armed in their lawn chairs by the freeway, looking for targets. Less comical are the real vigilantes – the gunmen on the trails.

We wash off Josseline's shrine with water, and pick little bits of beans out of the engraved letters. Then we take the empty slashed water jugs back and return with full ones. What else can we do?

By Thursday, I'm exhausted. My body feels heavy, my joints weak. My thigh muscles burn and I'm limping. My back and arms hurt from carrying water jugs. That's after only four days in the desert. I've gone on two hikes a day, maybe a few hours total. I can't imagine hiking this long through the night.

I set out to do a few water drops close to the road. Arriving near our first spot, we park the car and start over a hill, water jugs in hand. On the other side we see about a dozen men in ragged clothing. They hurry off when they see us, then stop at the base of the hill. We shout that we have food and water if they need it, and can offer medical attention. Then we head back to the truck for more water.

When we get back to the other side of the hill, two Border Patrol trucks are parked nearby. Did they hear us calling out? Are they following us? We don't want to draw attention to the men we saw, so we start the truck and drive to the next spot on the GPS. The trucks just sit there. Nobody gets out. We leave water at the next drop and go for a short hike. The desert feels more alive today – voices seem to rise from the bushes. The Border Patrol passes us again. We return to the water drop. The jugs are gone or empty, small rocks left in the empty bottles so they don't blow away. There's no sign of the men we saw earlier.

Back at camp, a patient is staying in the medic tent. He hurt his knee and his group left him. The medics are treating him for severe dehydration and a knee injury. I say "hola" to him as he hobbles through camp that evening, heading toward our sun shower. He looks about 40. According to the medics

and translators, he lived in the U.S. for 20 years before he got deported. His whole family lives in the United States. He said he's trying to return home.

Friday morning, our group does a quick morning patrol before heading to Tucson for the Streamline hearings. Operation Streamline began in 2005 in Tucson to file criminal charges against people caught crossing the border. They try 70 people every day, randomly selected from the hundreds they catch.

The courtroom is full of men and women in shackles, chains around their feet, their waists, their hands. The vast majority look young. And terrified.

First the judge sentences a group of indigenous people who don't speak Spanish or English. They are deported with no record because they can't enter a plea. Next, dozens of migrants who were caught crossing previously waive their right to due process and a trial by jury. They receive sentences of 2 weeks to 6 months in jail. Three others have prior offenses – things like minor in possession of alcohol or reckless driving. They also waive their rights to a trial, and get sent to jail.

Throughout the process, the judge mispronounces names and mixes people up. Finally he tells the last group, all first offenders, to stand up if they do not wish to waive their right to a trial. One man stands up, confused, and his court-appointed lawyer motions for him to sit back down. The hearing continues. The judge sentences the entire group to "voluntary" deportation, threatening jail time if they get caught coming back. He tells them to make a home for themselves in Mexico, or find another country that wants them.

"The world is a big place," he says.

Another man, who looks like he's in his early 20s, stands up and says in perfect English that he's lived in the U.S. since he was 8 years old. The judge tells him that his "free ride" in this country is over. Two women watching the hearing start sobbing. When the hearing is over, the prisoners walk in shackles past us, out a side door. When the man who spoke up passes, a young woman that could have been his sister or girlfriend cries out, "I love you!"

For the first time all week, I start to cry. I go to the restroom to dry my tears. I try to imagine how scary it is to get pulled away from your family, your community. Or how painful it is to be left behind.

The next day, we drive back to San Francisco, seven queers packed into two small cars. Our only barrier to returning home is California gas prices. We drive north, barbed wire fences and Border Patrol trucks fading in the distance. We pull into the city around 4 a.m. The fog engulfs us. As I tumble into my bed, I think about the people on the trail, crossing the desert. I wonder how long it will be before they finally get home.



# What about Ms. Bob?

## A teacher who transcends transgender stereotypes

By Molly Oleson

Music instructor Bob Davis breezes into his Music 26 class, earrings swinging wildly from his shaved head toward his broad shoulders. He's wearing an olive green linen blazer over a foam rubber brassiere, silk dress pants, and a pair of women's flats. He tosses a small black leather purse onto his desk and asks:

"You've seen me 'dress' before, right?"

His students nod.

"Same jokes, prettier package," he says, batting his iridescent eyelids and flashing a smile painted with "Pure Posh" Clinique lipstick.

They stare with curious fascination at "Ms. Bob," City College's "out" transgender faculty member.

Although Bob Davis was born a boy in Philadelphia more than a half century ago, today "he" identifies as "she."

Davis isn't fussy about pronouns, though.

"Some people call me Bob and some call me Ms. Bob," she says, pulling out two different CCSF business cards. One labeled "Bob Davis, instructor, music department." The other "Ms. Bob, transgender outreach and advocacy coordinator."

Labels don't matter. "It's still me underneath it all," Ms. Bob says.

To dispel any confusion she announces to her students on the first day of class that she'll be dressing occasionally as a woman.

"When I tell my students that I'll be 'dressing' I tell them that it doesn't affect my ability to lecture or my ability to tell a joke."

Her hope is that they will get used to the idea of transgender people fitting into the fabric of society.

"Most people know nothing about transgenders," she says. "Their knowledge is from movies where [we] are made out to be deranged murderers and prostitutes."

She's determined to change that stereotype.

"I want the world to see transgender people in positions of responsibility."

Ms. Bob is confident and animated, reciting verses and acting out scenes from old English ballads. Her expressions are exaggerated, her movements graceful. She points out incremental repetition, supernatural elements and faux choruses in between an amplified recording of Jean Ritchie's "Barbara Allen." She sits cross-legged, lady-like, at the upright piano, demonstrating rhythms and humming melodies.

An hour and a half later, she rushes across campus to her white '94 Mazda van named "Pearl." In the middle of the faculty parking lot, she stops to admire a young woman in black leggings, a fitted plaid dress and two long symmetrical ponytails.

"That's a fabulous look," Ms. Bob says. "I guess I'm just jealous. No hair, no hips."

Once inside "Pearl," she tosses a bag full of clothes into the back. "I didn't know how cold it would be later, so I brought some pantyhose just in case."

She unwraps a Lemon Zest Luna Nutrition Bar for Women and eats it on the way to the Ark of Refuge in San Francisco's SOMA district, where she is scheduled to do transgender outreach.

Prior to August 28, 2003, only a handful of City College faculty members knew Davis' secret. They were the ones who saw him at the opera and other special events, dressed to the nines.

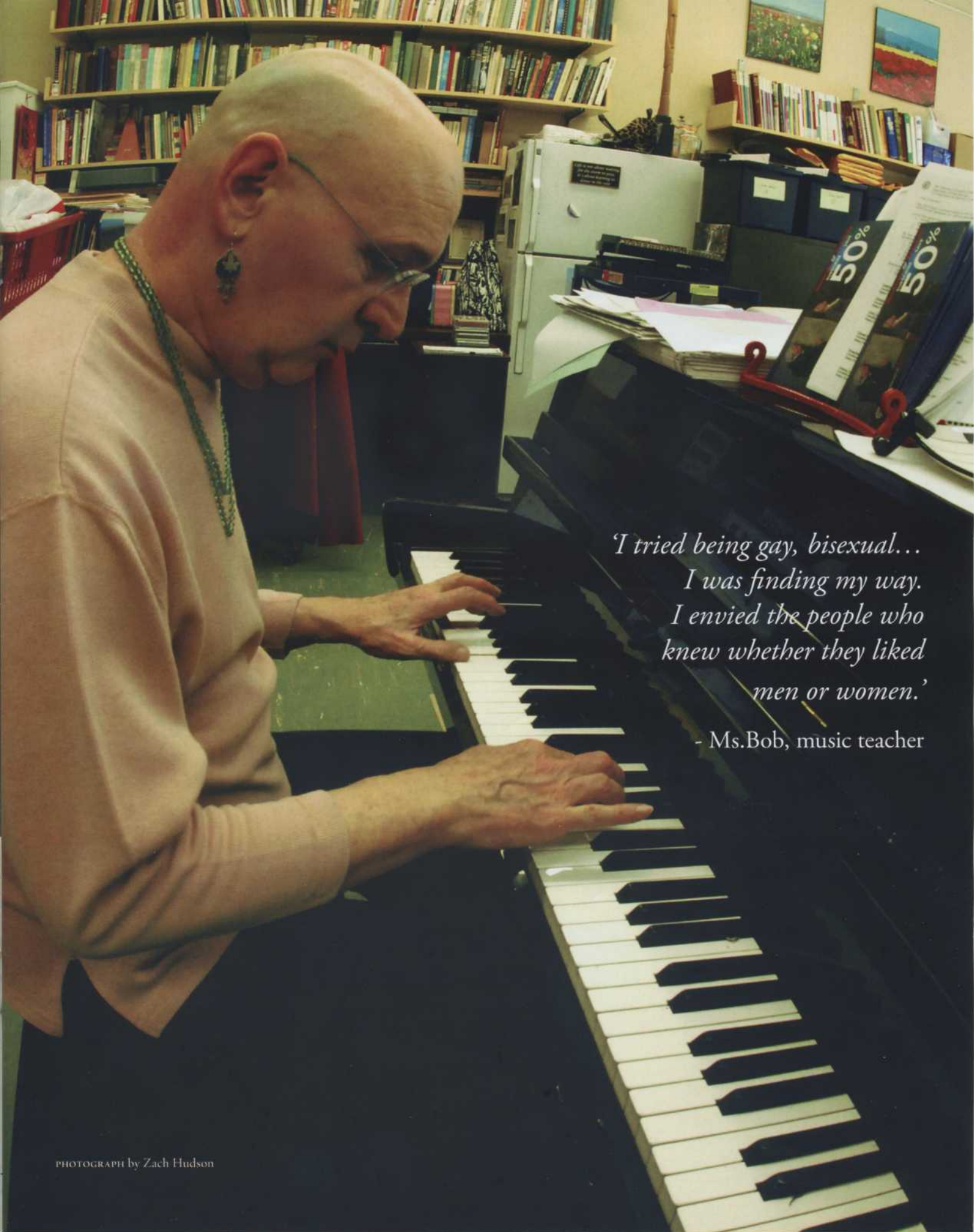
Davis didn't reveal his transgender identity to the rest of campus until the day he was awarded tenure – 27 years after being hired at the college.

"I did it in rather grand style," Ms. Bob says. Dressed en femme, she got the Board of Trustees' attention.

A photograph of her posing with the Board appeared on the front page of the Guardsman campus newspaper. She looked happy, proud... and relieved.

***Transgender:** an umbrella term that refers to people whose gender identity is different from their sex at birth. **Transsexual:** a person who has undergone surgery to attain the physical characteristics of the opposite sex.*

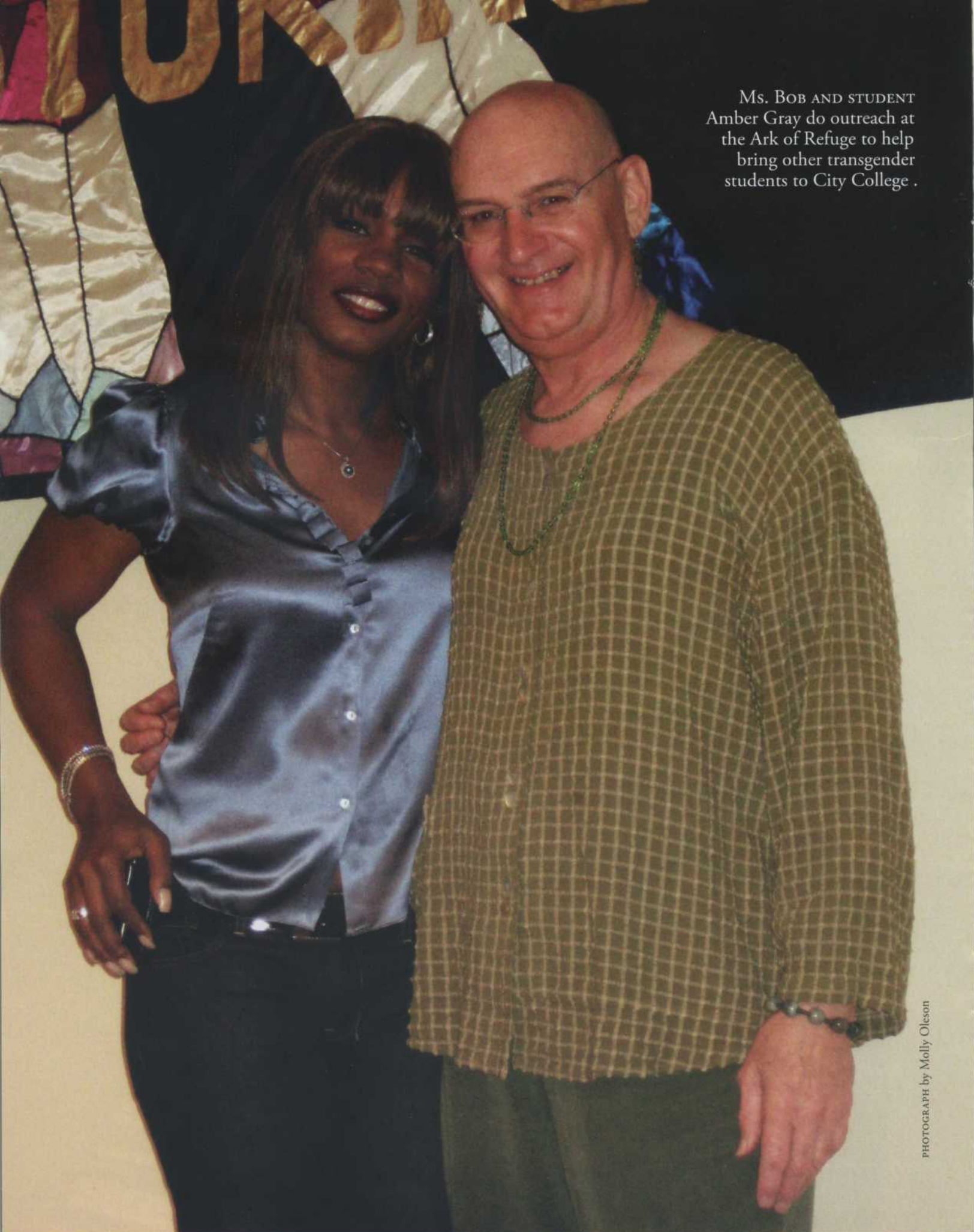




*'I tried being gay, bisexual...  
I was finding my way.  
I envied the people who  
knew whether they liked  
men or women.'*

*- Ms. Bob, music teacher*





Ms. BOB AND STUDENT  
Amber Gray do outreach at  
the Ark of Refuge to help  
bring other transgender  
students to City College .



*'Sex is what's between your legs; gender is what's between your ears.'*

– Virginia Charles Prince, the great-grandmother of the transgender movement

"I was [finally] out," she recalls.

It was the first of many steps she took toward fostering an environment accepting of gender expression.

Board of Trustees President Milton Marks remembers the day.

"When faculty members who have that level of comfort and strength are open about who they are, it sets a good example for everyone else," he says.

Ms. Bob was inspired to come out after former Gov. Gray Davis signed Assembly Bill 196, which added gender identity protection under California's Fair Employment and Housing Act.

"I was able to 'dress' with absolutely no fear because I had the law on my side," she says.

Continuing Education counselor Sarah Thompson encouraged her by pointing out the need for a role model for transgender students.

"It creates safety knowing there's someone who is a professional on campus who's out and who expresses interest in supporting the transgender community," Thompson says.

Ms. Bob made leading by example one of her job responsibilities. She began "dressing" not only for parties and special events, but as part of her daily professional life.

Expressing her identity in front of her students didn't come easily.

"The first time [I 'dressed' to teach] I must have gotten up three hours early I was so nervous," she says.

Today it has become routine.

"It's no different from when I don't 'dress'," she says, referring to the days she skips the makeup and wears men's button-down shirts and khaki pants. But she admits those days are rare.

"I almost never buy men's clothes anymore," she says. "If I do that long enough everything will change without me thinking of it."

Davis was 24 when he moved from Pennsylvania to California in 1972 to study electronic music composition and studio technique at the Conservatory for Contemporary Music at Mills College in Oakland. After completing a second bachelor's degree (and while pursuing a master's), he was hired as a part-time music instructor at City College in the summer of '76.

Teaching allowed him to get involved in the two things he loved most – music and theater. He was writing music for the avant-garde company Soon 3 and the string group, Kronos Quartet, and performing at art galleries around San Francisco.

"I was living life as a bohemian artist," Ms. Bob recalls as she sits in her office, surrounded by music books. A copy of "The Whorehouse Bells Were Ringing and Other Songs Cowboys

Sing" sits on her desk, near an Encore student guitar.

College was an uncertain time, she admits now.

"I tried being gay, bisexual... I was finding my way," she says. "I envied the people who knew whether they liked men or women. They were confident. I was dealing with questions and issues that they were spared."

Decades later, she read something by Virginia Charles Prince – the first person to define the term transgender – that made sense:

"Sex is what's between your legs; gender is what's between your ears."

Ms. Bob found the identity for which she had been searching. And though she wasn't open about it until six years ago, there were hints growing up that she'd been transgender all her life.

"I was stealing my mother's bathing suits and trying them on when she was out of the house when I was 13," Ms. Bob says.

But her family didn't know, and they still don't.

"My 85-year-old mother doesn't need to know that I wear women's underwear," she says.

Ms. Bob pulls up to the Ark of Refuge and checks her face in the rearview mirror.

Carrying a purse and briefcase, she walks into the Health and Wellness Fair and is greeted by a room full of transgender people and their allies, a term used to describe transgender supporters. Before speaking, she arranges applications and course catalogs on a table draped in a red City College of San Francisco pennant.

When she is introduced, she approaches a stage framed by a large banner reading, "Transcending Boundaries, Restoring Hope." And that's her main objective – to encourage the transgender community to come to college.

"I just taught a class like this," Ms. Bob says, showing off her outfit. "I wear earrings, makeup, and whatever else..."

She tells the audience that there's a level of transgender acceptance at City College.

"We want you there. We're there to help you and we have a very open door. And most of the faculty have a very open heart."

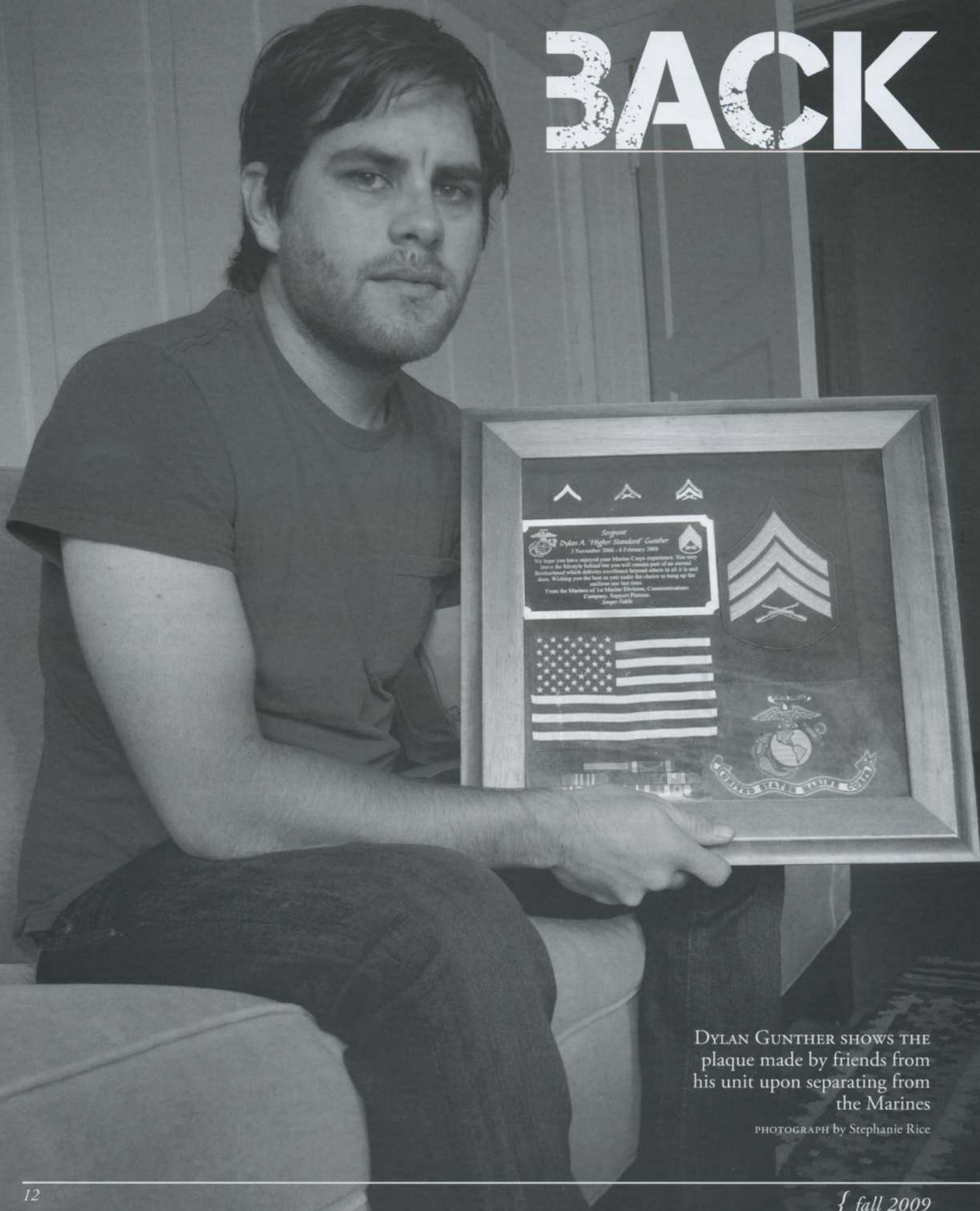
Through City College's Queer Resource Center and the former transgender student club, TGCCSF, Ms. Bob met transgenders but knew there had to be more in the community who wanted to attend college.

"I had the feeling that we were hitting the tip of the iceberg – that the people making it to campus were a small percentage of the people interested."

...continued on page 36



# BACK



DYLAN GUNTHER SHOWS THE plaque made by friends from his unit upon separating from the Marines

PHOTOGRAPH by Stephanie Rice



# FROM THE

# FRONT

## A MARINE'S MEMORIES OF IRAQ

By Dylan Gunther

Ten years ago, on my 17th birthday, I joined the Marine Corps. During my eight-year tour, I touched dirt in 26 countries on five continents. I was proud to be part of something so much bigger than me. Throughout my enlistment I met some of the most amazing and brave people in the world, and visited some of its darkest corners.

From the eastern coast of Africa and throughout the Middle East, I've slept face down in the sand, and watched the sun rise over foreign soil. Months spent without any outside contact. No mail. No time off. No phone calls. Christmas, holidays and birthdays spent in places not mentioned on maps, with people I will never see again.

For years I trained alongside the leathernecks in my platoon. From operations "Bright Star" in Somalia to "Cobra Gold" in Thailand. We traveled as a family, relying solely on each other. Life on deployment is hard. Finding a friend in your unit is essential for your sanity. Being able to talk with somebody about what's on your mind can make all the difference.

In early 2002 my unit was sent to Afghanistan then later to Iraq. I deployed with Erik, a friend I met about a year earlier while training in Guantanamo Bay. We instantly became close. Erik and I relied on each other as an anchor of familiarity in the ever-changing landscape. We went on several deployments together before Operation Iraqi Freedom. We spent a lot of time hiking and training in nearly every desert north of the equator, but knew the worst was still ahead.

After arriving in Kuwait during the troop buildup in early 2003, we spent the next few months acclimating and preparing for the impending Iraq conflict. When President Bush gave

Saddam Hussein 48 hours to comply with UN weapons inspectors, my unit was on standby at the Kuwait-Iraq border. After 2 days we broke camp. Sometime before 3 a.m. on March 20, 2003, the order came from headquarters to breach the berm, a 20-foot mound of loose sand that stretched the length of the Kuwait-Iraq border. It was the only thing separating us from Saddam's Republican Guard.

When the invasion began, we were the first combat unit into Iraq. Our mission was to clear the way for the rest of the coalition force to enter the Rumayla Oilfields in Southern Iraq, then continue north to Baghdad.

My platoon commander began his mission briefing that morning as we waited for the combat engineers to plow a highway through the makeshift border.

"They've been entrenched for weeks, have superior artillery, more tanks and home-field advantage. We're going to suffer heavy casualties," he warned.

A sudden explosion punctuated his comments. The loud concussion reminded me this was real. Like a tanker truck full of gasoline, it lit the sky, then burned vivid in the distance. It was a SCUD missile, Saddam's bus-sized weapon of choice. In the past, Saddam used SCUDs to deliver chemical attacks. We donned our gas masks and hoped that would be the extent of his opening salvo. We were wrong.

Turning north, I stared helplessly through the fogged up lenses of my gas mask into Iraq and saw hundreds of SCUDs descending toward us. The first one missed its target but I knew they would get closer. Like a barrage of giant flares they burned bright red in the distance and left a trail of faint orange smoke in the night sky behind them.



As suddenly as the first SCUD appeared, a fleet of Patriot missiles numbering in the thousands burned blue and raced to intercept them from over the horizon behind me. The missiles met violently in the sky and erupted in huge balls of fire that dwarfed the stars. The Patriots eliminated the SCUD threat, but the exchange unsettled my nerves. The first shots had been fired without ever seeing the enemy.

As part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Regimental Combat Team 5 reached Baghdad within 20 days, the fastest advance on a capital city in military history. Entering Iraq with 7,503 Marines, we suffered 138 casualties in less than a month.

We were in Iraq for almost three weeks and on pace to reach the capital city within days. Consisting of about 10 vehicles and 75 Marines, our convoy crept along Highway 1, the main road leading north into Baghdad. We encountered sporadic pockets of enemy resistance, but pressed forward, fatigued yet determined. Erik and I rode alone in the lead vehicle. He drove as I monitored the radio, periodically calling back to the command vehicle with status updates.

We talked a lot during convoys. During those long treks it was the only way to pass time. Sometimes we drove through the desert for 12-15 hours without seeing anything. Days would go by like that. We talked about what we would do when we got back to the states... about our favorite home-cooked meals. Our cravings changed daily with our moods.

Late one afternoon we came to a bridge crossing the Euphrates River. The road wound through a valley toward a small village. As we approached, a hurried voice from another vehicle in the convoy yelled through the headset:

"CONTACT LEFT, CONTACT LEFT!"

The convoy had been ambushed. A rocket-propelled grenade had been fired at us from the valley below. The blast hit another Humvee in the convoy and flipped the 2-ton vehicle onto its

side. Dozens of Iraqi soldiers began engaging with heavy machine guns.

As everyone jumped from the vehicles, I leaned over the hood of the Humvee, keeping the vehicle between myself and the incoming bullets. I was scared but had to block out the paralyzing horror of the situation. I had become numb to the war and the reality of what was happening around me.

Stopping only to reload weapons, we exchanged fire with the Iraqi soldiers. As I knelt down to reload a fresh magazine I looked toward Erik. He was slouched down, leaning against the back tire. Holding his right thigh, he looked back at me. I knew that something was wrong and ran to him, yelling for the corpsman. He had been shot. Bullets continued to fly in both directions as the medic approached. I asked Erik if he was alright.

He gave me a thumbs-up and said, "It's no big deal, just my leg, get back in the fight." I left him and returned to my original position. He was airlifted to a field hospital for emergency surgery.

The skirmish continued for several hours until the Iraqi soldiers were out of bullets, or lost the will to fight. Either way they stopped shooting. Just as quickly as it started, the battle was over. Most of the surviving Iraqis were severely wounded.

I learned later that Erik died – on April 4, 2003. He was 22.

That night, my platoon camped near the river and patrolled the area. The chaplain held a memorial service for the Marines we lost that day. Although I hadn't been formally told, I knew that Erik was among them.

The platoons took turns gathering in a small canvas tent, where an upside-down M-16 with affixed bayonet stood between a pair of boots on a pile of sandbags. A helmet and a blank pair of dog tags rested on top of the rifle.

The chaplain said his invocation as we sat in silence, and then, one-by-one we left the tent. No one made eye contact.

CPL. DYLAN GUNTHER  
(left), Cpl. Jarrett Cash  
(right) with Iraqi children  
in 2003





Everybody stared at the ground as they walked out. Nobody mentioned Erik or any of the other casualties. Talking about them would have made us face our own mortality.

It was the first time I'd lost a friend. I didn't know how to cope with the loss. I tried not to think about it. I knew it would only make things worse.

Early the next morning we were ordered to convoy to a small city a few miles north of our position. Recon spotted heavy enemy activity in the area during night patrol.

Within minutes after arriving in the village we were greeted by dozens of locals. They lined the streets and waved American flags. Despite the previous day's events just outside the city we were treated as liberators and invited into their homes. They

ongoing conflict except the charred remains of Ba'ath Party buildings and skeletons of military trucks deserted along the roadside. It felt like a ghost town. The streets were empty except for a few nomadic merchants. Most of the several million residents took refuge in their homes as coalition forces poured into the city. It became apparent there would be no final battle for the capital city.

Residents slowly emerged from their homes. They started following the convoys through the streets. Within a few hours, thousands of Iraqis began to parade throughout the city. Some cheered and waved as we drove by, others spat and threw rocks. Our convoy made its way to a giant statue of Saddam where a small crowd had gathered. They were throwing shoes at the

## **"OUR FIGHT IS NOT WITH THE IRAQI PEOPLE, NOR IS IT WITH MEMBERS OF THE IRAQI ARMY WHO CHOOSE TO SURRENDER."**

**-GEN. JAMES MATTIS**

were eager to share the little food they had and were excited to practice their English. While talking with the town elders we learned a rogue unit of Saddam's Ba'ath Party was robbing merchants and quartering themselves in homes throughout the city. We were informed that most of the Ba'ath Party soldiers left as they saw our convoys, but a few remained on a farm in the western outskirts.

The convoy split into squads of 14 Marines, each with a different area to patrol. My squad was assigned to go to the farm and arrest any Ba'ath Party soldiers we came in contact with.

As the squad pulled within a few hundred yards of the farmhouse, several Iraqi soldiers fired their machine guns. The driver of my vehicle slammed on the brakes and positioned the Humvee as a barricade from the attack. We returned fire and killed a few of the rogue soldiers. The rest began waving white pillowcases above their heads.

We took them into custody and continued to search the farmhouse, adjacent barn and several warehouses on the property.

A young Marine from Pennsylvania yelled from the barn: "Cpl. Gunther, there's six people tied up down here — they're still alive!"

We discovered a family huddled in the cellar. A husband, wife and their four young sons.

Bound hand and foot, with pillowcases over their heads, they had been held hostage for two days. We quickly untied them and gave them water and medical attention.

Helping that family gave me a sense of accomplishment and purpose. It added meaning to Erik's sacrifice.

Reaching Baghdad signaled an end to a war we were told would last only a few months. Surprisingly, we met no enemy resistance as we entered the city. There was little sign of the

statue and there was a giant rope wrapped around its neck. We were told not to interfere as long as they remained peaceful.

We stopped to observe about 200 yards from the statue. Within minutes, hundreds of Iraqis joined the effort and somehow persuaded one of the coalition units in the area to help. Journalists began recording the event as it unfolded. The gathering crowd grew excited and began to cheer as the giant symbol of Saddam's oppression began to topple. A Marine was lifted by crane to the head of the statue and replaced the rope with a steel cable. He draped an American flag over Saddam's face. Instantly, the crowd began cheering even louder. As the cable attached to the crane slowly pulled away the statue began to fall. The crowd erupted as it hit the pavement in the city square. The cheering mob trampled the statue. Within a few hours it was destroyed beyond recognition. Saddam's reign had symbolically ended. For the first time it felt like the end of my deployment was in sight.

We stayed in Iraq a few more weeks after watching the statue fall, slowly making our way south to Kuwait before returning home. I felt like there was still so much to do, but was grateful to have survived the war.

America lost 580 troops in 2003. To date, more than 6,000 service members have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since returning home in July 2003, I've battled feelings of guilt and remorse. I witnessed a lot of horrific things. There were several close calls. Innocent men, women and children who became casualties of war. The loss of a friend. A helicopter ride shared with a cargo of body bags. Having to change blood-stained clothes. Rationing food and water... and going hungry.

Like so many other veterans, I've been diagnosed with PTSD, which has caused memory suppression and short-term



## DEALING WITH LOSS IS NEVER EASY. THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES OF WAR MAKE IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT.

memory loss. As if watching a re-run of a movie, I remember little details and sometimes huge events when I reflect on what happened. Group therapy and psychiatry didn't help. I found that separating from the military and starting school has been the most effective treatment. The slower pace and absence of stress have helped my recovery. After six years, progress has been slow.

I am finally starting to understand that the problems I have aren't something that can be fixed overnight. And that ignoring them will only make them worse. The hardest thing has been admitting to myself that I can't do this alone. I see how well other veterans have dealt with it and gain courage and strength through them.

Dealing with loss is never easy. The traumatic experiences of war make it even more difficult. But for the first time since returning home from Operation Iraqi Freedom, I feel hopeful about the future.

I started attending City College of San Francisco this semester under the "Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act," a revamped version of the GI Bill. In addition to giving me the opportunity to go to college, the program has changed my life. It gave me the financial stability to attend school without having to worry about paying rent. And even more, provided me with time to focus on my recovery.

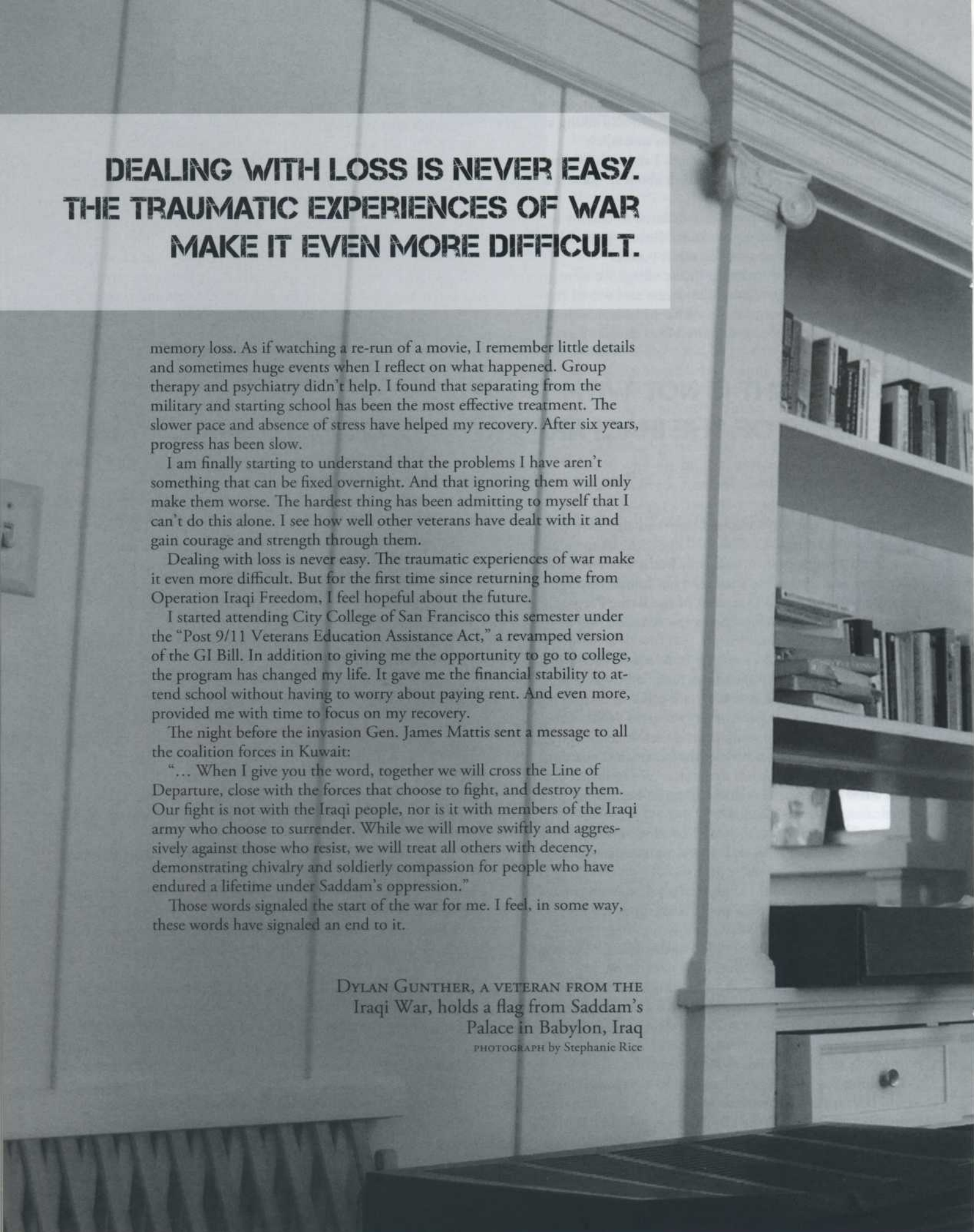
The night before the invasion Gen. James Mattis sent a message to all the coalition forces in Kuwait:

"... When I give you the word, together we will cross the Line of Departure, close with the forces that choose to fight, and destroy them. Our fight is not with the Iraqi people, nor is it with members of the Iraqi army who choose to surrender. While we will move swiftly and aggressively against those who resist, we will treat all others with decency, demonstrating chivalry and soldierly compassion for people who have endured a lifetime under Saddam's oppression."

Those words signaled the start of the war for me. I feel, in some way, these words have signaled an end to it.

DYLAN GUNTHER, A VETERAN FROM THE  
Iraqi War, holds a flag from Saddam's  
Palace in Babylon, Iraq

PHOTOGRAPH by Stephanie Rice











NINE-YEAR-OLD TEDDY LEANS BACK in his chair after a hamburger dinner at his mom's house. Both autistic and deaf, Teddy is developmentally at a two- to four-year-old level.





# raising teddy

## Challenges of parenting an autistic child

STORY and PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY Susan Boeckmann

It's Saturday at the Lakeside Mall Baskin Robbins in Daly City. Dana and her 8-year-old son, Teddy, are sitting inside enjoying their ice cream, when he suddenly drops his cone on the table and runs out the door into the parking lot.

An instant later Dana is chasing him, screaming his name. She grabs him by the shoulders and pulls him back inside.

The girls behind the counter and the family at the table by the door are watching, confused.

Dana and Teddy sit back down at the table. Dana's heart is pounding. Teddy picks up what's left of his ice cream cone and continues eating as if nothing happened.

"I've got no idea why he did that," Dana says, her voice shaking. She can't ask him why and he can't tell her. That's because Teddy is autistic. And deaf.

Dana Galloway and Ted Russo's son was born on August 4, 2000. The next day, when Teddy didn't respond to a routine hearing test, doctors told Dana and Ted they needed to bring their newborn back to the hospital. That's when Teddy was diagnosed "profoundly deaf."

Before Teddy's second birthday, his pre-school teachers noticed that he was behaving strangely. He would not make eye contact with anyone or interact with other children. Instead, he sat by himself flapping his hands or lining things up in a row.





{ Teddy has his father's thick, dark hair and his mother's large, brown eyes. He's big for his age, and already stronger than his mother. }





OPPOSITE PAGE (CLOCKWISE): TEDDY AND HIS MOTHER WAIT their turn at Baskin Robbins; Teddy enjoys a soak in the bathtub; Ted Sr. ties his son's tennis shoes before a trip to the playground (Teddy wears hightops to make it harder for him to kick his shoes off); During snack time at school, Teddy's teacher's aide keeps him from eating with his fingers.

ABOVE (CLOCKWISE): IN A RARE QUIET MOMENT, Teddy rests on his trampoline after a long day; At bedtime, Dana tries to get Teddy to spit out a piece of blanket he has chewed off; Teddy scribbles instead of practicing writing his name; Teddy pouts at recess because his aide will no longer push him on the swing.





EVERY SCHOOL DAY, DANA BRINGS TEDDY BREAKFAST IN bed to avoid struggling to get him to the table.

He can't tell anyone when he's sick or hurt or if he's sad or hungry.

Teddy's parents, Dana and Ted, both City College staff members and former students, soon had a second diagnosis to cope with: "atypical autism."

They learned all they could about autism – a brain development disorder that affects a person's ability to make sense of the world around him. People with autism have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication and social interactions. They may also be obsessed with counting things, putting things in order, and with following rigid behavioral patterns.

Ted remembers thinking, "What's his life going to be like? How will he be able to communicate or express himself? He's going to have such a hard time in life... It's hard enough being deaf, but an autistic kid's attention shoots all over the place... Things would be twice as hard for him."

Dana had gotten used to the idea of having a child with disabilities, so the autism diagnosis didn't hit her as hard. She had seen other children in Teddy's pre-school class with worse disabilities.

At nine, Teddy is a handsome child. He has his father's thick dark hair and his mother's large brown eyes. He's big for his age, and already stronger than his mother.

Physically he can do most anything any other nine-year-old can. He can swim, do a headstand, hop, skip and run. He dresses himself, uses the toilet on his own and loves to raid the refrigerator.

He learns by being led through activities and by observing other people. But cognitively he lags behind. Despite his physical age, mentally he's a 2- to 4-year-old.

"Teddy is like a younger kid in a larger body," says Ted.

Communicating with Teddy is the greatest challenge. He can't hear. And he doesn't talk. His response to sign language is limited. And he rarely uses any signs himself.

He can't tell anyone when he's sick or hurt or if he's sad or hungry.

Everyone must be constantly on guard, monitoring him, looking for the changes in behavior that could indicate something is wrong.

Teddy's condition – autism combined with deafness – is rare. And difficult to treat. Most educational, vocational, and medical programs are designed to address one disability at a time. Without specialized treatment these exceptional children can fall through the cracks. That nearly happened to Teddy.

The Pacifica School District paid for Teddy to attend the San Mateo County program for



children with special needs. But when Teddy turned seven, the school district couldn't pay for the county program anymore. Ted says they saw Teddy as just another "little bag of money they wanted to keep for themselves."

At his new school, Teddy began acting out.

"He was hitting everybody," says Dana. "Maybe he saw other kids doing it. Or maybe he was really frustrated at not being able to communicate and was lashing out..."

Ted worries that Teddy might have been bullied by other students.

This year Teddy has returned to the San Mateo County program. And he is blossoming. There are fewer children in the classroom and he has room to move around. He's stopped hitting people.

Dana says she can see the progress Teddy is making. "It's slow, but it's there."

Although Dana and Ted split up a few years after their son was born, they are still bound by their love for him.

"The overriding concern is Teddy," Dana says. "Teddy's doctors and teachers say it's great that we get along so well. It makes it easier for everyone."

Both Dana and Ted receive assistance from the Golden Gate Regional Center, a state-funded non-profit that assists families dealing with developmental disabilities. Dana discovered the Golden Gate Regional Center a few years ago.

"I started crying to one of the nurses in Teddy's toddler program about how I needed help. She told me to contact the regional center." But by then it was too late to take advantage of the center's programs for kids under five. Dana is still angry that no one told her about the center before then. She and Ted say that's typical of services for autistic kids. Parents have to fend for themselves.

"You find out your kid is autistic and that's it," says Dana. "Nobody says anything beyond that. We got more support as the parents of a deaf child. At the hospital when we were told that Teddy was deaf, we were given a big binder of information on what's available to help a deaf child, a kind of 'Welcome to the Deaf Community' kit."

There is no such handbook for parents of an autistic child.

"There are resources out there, but you have to find them," says Ted. "You have to fight for them."

"It's so hard to get answers," Dana says. "I keep getting turned away from autism groups because of Teddy's deafness. They're always telling me to talk to someone else... Or the medical insurance won't cover it. I still feel lost in the process."

Despite the challenges they face with their son,



AT THE PLAYGROUND, TEDDY'S DAD TRIES TO COAX his son to play in the treehouse.

Dana and Ted are glad they have Teddy.

"In some ways, he is so amazing," Dana says. "He's given me a more open mind about things. He's added to the experience of life."

"It's been well worth it," says Ted. "I love my son – he's fantastic. Things you take for granted with regular kids you don't take for granted with kids like Teddy."

There's a huge sense of accomplishment when you teach a child with a disability something new.

Ted and Dana have learned nothing comes easy with Teddy.

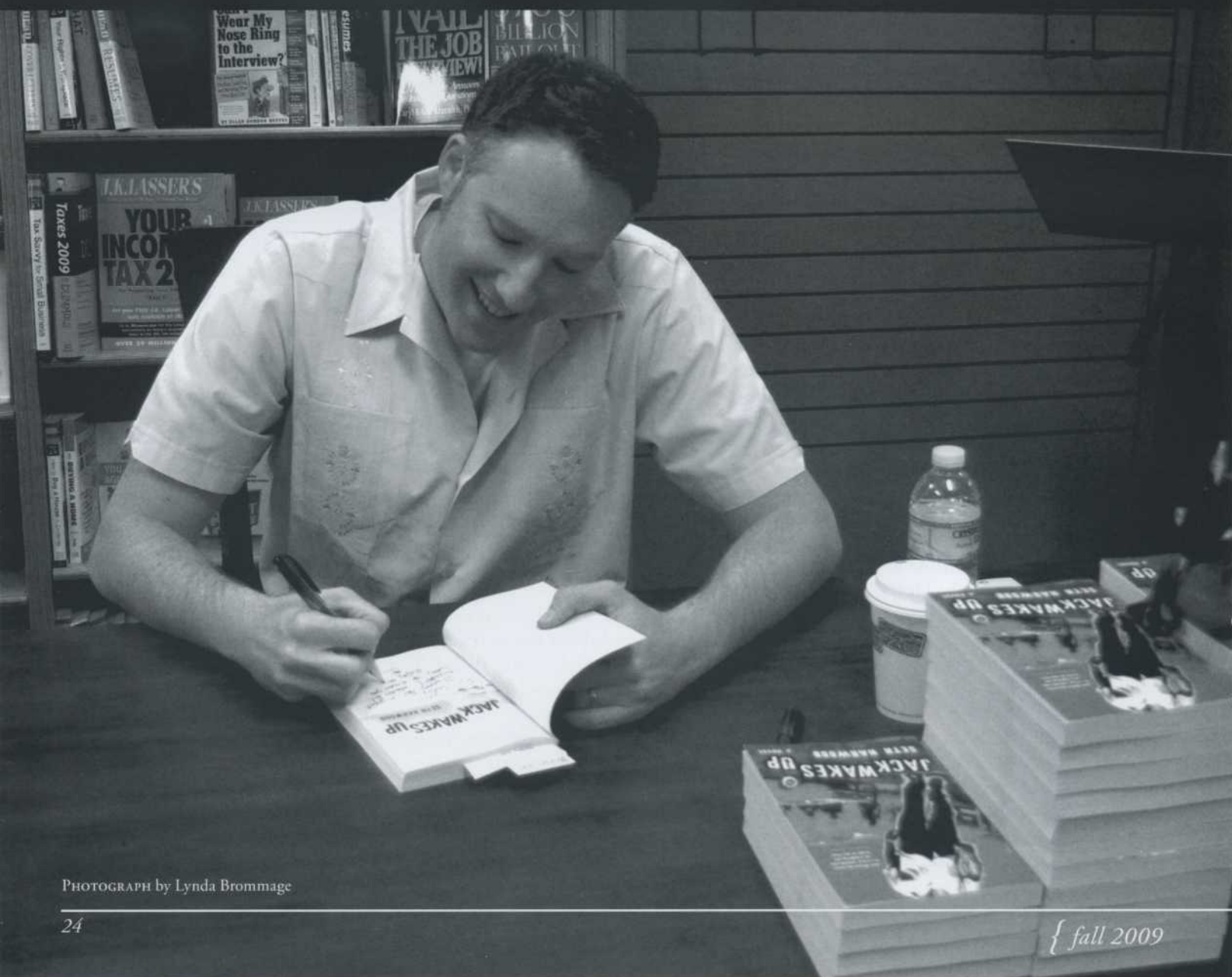
"But," Ted says, "the more you put into something – when you finally get a return – it's that much more rewarding."



# An Audible Success

By Michael Condiff

How Seth Harwood became  
a new media mystery maverick



PHOTOGRAPH by Lynda Brommage



**S**eth Harwood is smiling. And for good reason. More than three dozen people have shown up at Books Inc. on Van Ness for a book signing of his debut crime novel, "Jack Wakes Up." Several fans are buying more than one copy. A man from Sacramento, in black boots and jacket, is at the register with eight copies balanced on his motorcycle helmet.

Within moments, every copy has been signed in an almost illegible scrawl by Harwood.

"Are you kidding me? That's a great autograph," the 36-year-old City College instructor says. "The big-time writers give you a line with a hump in it. At least you can make out some of my letters."

At a table weighted with stacks of his book, Harwood is dressed in a sky-blue short-sleeved shirt, dark slacks and sneakers. Though graying at the temples, his short brown hair frames a youthful face. At 6-foot-6, his feet stick out from under the front of the table. As each fan approaches with a book to be signed, Harwood sits up and the feet disappear. As they leave, he relaxes and the feet reemerge.

Although most people in the crowd have never met Harwood before, they know his voice. They've been listening to it for more than two years.

The process by which Harwood got his novel published may have a greater impact than the book itself.

In 2006, frustrated with waffling interest from literary agents in his crime novel, Harwood turned to the Internet.

Since he enjoyed listening to books on CD, he decided to market "Jack" as audio instead of text. That way people could listen to it in the car, gym, or wherever.

During weekly podcasts on his website, Harwood began reading his then-unpublished work, chapter by chapter, altering his voice to match the characters.

The reaction was surprising.

Promoted on Podiobooks.com and iTunes, Harwood's podcasts drew more than 40,000 listeners. When he offered a free PDF of "Jack" online, it was downloaded more than 80,000 times.

"Initially, it was just a way to keep [the book] moving forward. It ended up growing into something else altogether," said Harwood, who also teaches creative writing at Stanford.

Due to its online popularity, "Jack" was picked up by a small New Hampshire publishing house.

On the day of its release, in what Harwood concedes was a choreographed effort, "Jack" sold enough copies to become the Amazon.com top-selling crime fiction novel when fans flooded the website.

The demand raised eyebrows in the publishing industry. The next day, Harwood began getting offers from agents. Within a month, "Jack" was sold to Three Rivers Press – a paperback

division of Random House.

Set in San Francisco, "Jack Wakes Up" chronicles a one-time action movie star who finds himself in the middle of a multinational drug deal.

In chapter one, Harwood sets the scene:

"The diner is built out of an old cable car, with a lunch counter along one side and booths on the other. Ralph sits alone at the last table eating, hunched over his plate, long brown hair hanging curly around his face... His eyebrows form a thick black mustache over his eyes."

By chapter six, Ralph is dead.

Publishers Weekly wrote: "Readers who like their hard-boiled crime fiction violent and gritty will cheer Harwood's debut..."

Re-released with a new cover and marketed nationwide, the 300-page novel shot to the Top Ten on Independent Mystery Bookseller's list.

Because he wouldn't take no for an answer, Harwood had become a bestseller.

"I had reached the point where I wasn't going to be sending stuff out [to agents] anymore," he said. "That was a very frustrating process – very unsatisfying – and when the rejections would come in, it always left me feeling like I was back at square zero."

"I realized that if anything was going to happen with the book, I was going to have to make it happen myself. The podcasting community rallied around me and got involved and the momentum from that just kept building. We wanted to get

New York's attention and people were energized by the feeling that 'We're all in this together.'"

It worked.

The determination to write settled on Harwood in his early 20s, after returning from a semester at University College in London. He completed an Economics degree at Washington University in St. Louis and began working as a commodities broker on Wall Street.

"I had taken this attitude to college that it was all about getting a great job and making lots of money, but in London that changed," he said.

He tried painting and sculpting – but writing turned out to be his passion.

"While I was working on Wall Street, I was also working on this novel. During the day I'd be down on the floor of the exchange... buying and selling and yelling and that sort of crazy thing. And then at night, I'd go home and write."

It took him a year to finish the novel.

"It wasn't very good and I had no idea how to revise it," he said.

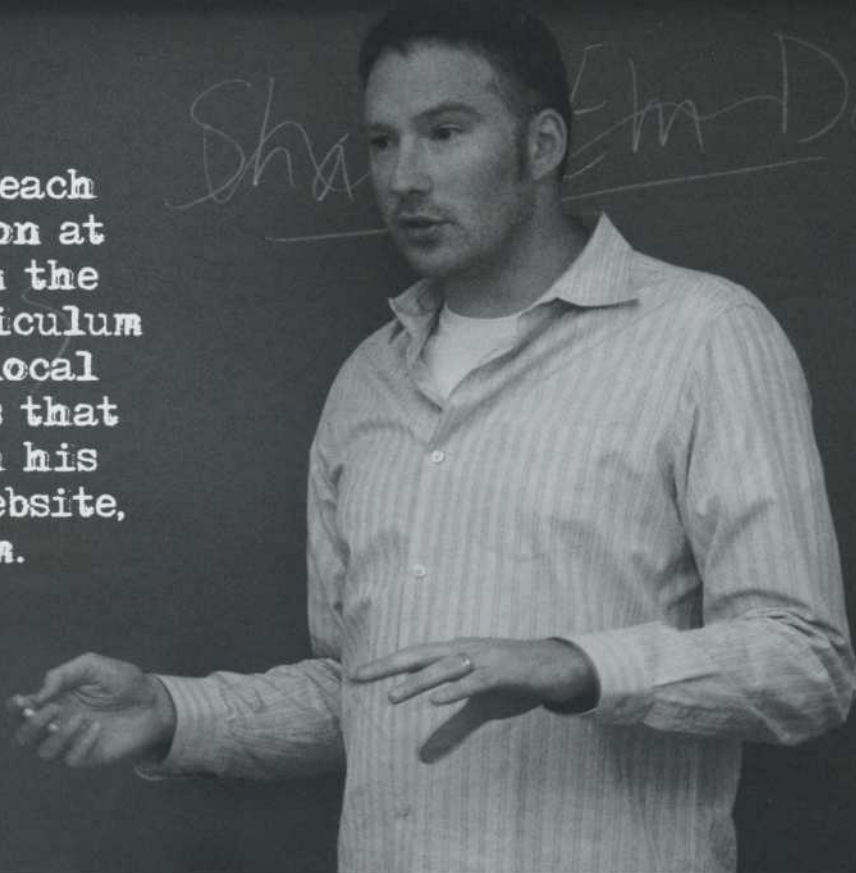
He quit Wall Street and began writing full-time. It wasn't easy.

"At that point, I knew I wanted to write, but I didn't really

**During weekly podcasts  
on his website, Harwood  
began reading his  
then-unpublished work,  
chapter by chapter**



Harwood will teach Detective Fiction at City College in the spring. The curriculum will focus on local mystery writers that he met through his crime fiction website, CrimeWAV.com.



PHOTOGRAPH by Antonio Morales

know what it was to be a writer," Harwood said. "I'd go to these parties and tell people, 'Yeah, I'm a writer.' And they'd say, 'Oh, have you had anything published?' And I'd say, 'No.' And that was pretty much the end of the conversation. They'd just sort of walk away."

Undaunted, Harwood applied to the prestigious Iowa Writer's Workshop in 1998. He didn't get in, but was accepted two years later after taking creative writing classes at Harvard Extension and Emerson College.

"It's sort of the Holy Grail for writers," Harwood says of the workshop, which accepts approximately 5 percent of applicants each year. Bestselling authors Flannery O'Connor, John Irving and Raymond Carver are among its alumni.

"I wanted to go there and have nothing to distract me, nothing to do but write. And that's exactly what I got. It was a blessing and a curse. It was so boring. I really got to focus on my writing, but I also realized that everyone needs stimulus. It's hard to fill up your days with just writing."

After two years of having his work picked apart, Harwood says his ego was bruised. One of his instructors pulled lines out of his story and held them up like dirty laundry, asking Harwood if he picked them up in a dollar sale.

"He'd just slam you in front of the whole class," Harwood said.

Ready to do anything but write, he left the workshop, got married, and began teaching high school in his hometown, Boston.

When his wife, Joelle, was accepted to grad school at Cal in 2005, the couple loaded down their 2003 silver Toyota Rav4 and drove cross-country with their black Lab-Chow, Hadley. They moved into an apartment near Tilden Park in North Berkeley that overlooks the Golden Gate, Alcatraz and

downtown San Francisco. Harwood started teaching at Chabot College in Hayward. The following year he was hired at City College and began writing again.

"Jack Wakes Up" sprang out of his love for crime novels, movies, video games, and TV series like "Dexter" and "The Wire."

"He's transformed himself from a guy who used to write short stories in pen on a legal pad to a guy who's a leader in podcasting and new online media," said Joelle, a recruiter for Envision Schools, a charter school management organization in San Francisco.

Harwood now conducts "author boot camps" with his friend and podcasting mentor, Scott Sigler, a New York Times bestselling science fiction writer. Their weekend seminars teach writers alternative paths to getting their work published. They recently were featured speakers at the Writer's Digest Conference in New York.

Harwood tells aspiring writers there are alternatives to mainstream media.

"Even before my book was picked up by Random House, I was thinking that this was something I wanted to start bringing into my classroom. It's just another way to get writing students excited about their own work... to show them other ways, outside the box, to market their work."

Harwood may still employ some of those alternative methods. He has completed two sequels and a prequel to "Jack," none of which have been published.

But that likely won't stop him.

"If I have to publish them myself," he said, "I'll get them out there."





# ACRYLICS, INK & MILK

## A perspective on Ming Ren's Universe

By Raen Payne

Tucked away behind the new Student Health Center, Bungalow 205 sits at the edge of campus, like an abandoned outpost.

The exterior is weathered from years of neglect. The overhang is rusted and the sidewall paint is peeling.

Inside the crowded classroom, the smell of ink is thick.

In one corner, rolls of shuan paper, made from plant fibers, and brushes are piled up to the rafters. A porcelain sink at the front of the room is stained with black ink from calligraphy brushes.

A Chinese brush painting class is in session. Instructor Ming Ren stands in front of a dusty chalkboard, his thin, 5-foot-6-inch frame barely fills his green polo shirt and gray slacks. His jet-black hair bounces above his head as he

DETAIL VIEW  
of Ming Ren's  
"Universal Valley"





ART from "Poetry in Painting: The Work of Ming Ren"



PHOTOGRAPH BY Maria Antonieta Solorzano

REN'S REALISTIC OIL PAINTING OF MARILYN MONROE CAPTURES THE BLONDE BOMBSHELL IN A MONA LISA POSE. THE PALETTE AND BRUSHES ARE THE ARTIST'S TOUCH.

MING REN'S EXPERIMENTAL WATERCOLOR SCROLLS demonstrate the versatility of the artist.

demonstrates calligraphy. His energy is infectious.

Students watch intently as he dips a wide, 12-inch-long brush into a cup of water. He carefully holds it up so everyone can see and presses it against the chalkboard. Then he slowly pulls the brush straight down, pauses momentarily, and ends with a perfect hook.

After the demonstration, the class practices the technique they have just learned before moving on to painting bamboo on rice paper.

"After calligraphy you will have more energy," Ren says quickly, in a heavy Chinese accent. "Bamboo is kind of a body exercise."

Every seat in the class is occupied. Some of the students have

taken this class several times.

"The classroom is awful (but) they want to stay here," says Ren. "I'm glad they are serious students."

Although he won't say exactly when, Ren was born sometime in the '50s in Hangzhou, China.

As a child, his parents – both science professors – discouraged his interest in art. They wanted him to pursue a more practical career.

As a teenager during the Cultural Revolution, Ren painted billboard-sized government propaganda posters for the public square in Hangzhou.

Known today for his Chinese brush painting and



contemporary artwork, his realistic oil paintings are rooted in China's Revolution.

By 1980, when the Revolution was over, Ren applied to the prestigious China Academy of Art. Selected from 22,000 applicants, he was one of only 10 students accepted. The week-long entrance exam required students to produce technical, accurate drawings and paintings. For the drawing portion of the exam, they had to sketch 100 basketball players in 45 minutes.

His classical education included plein air studies that required him to paint from life outdoors. When most students went home for the holidays, Ren stayed on campus to paint. After graduation, he taught at the academy. As Western art began appearing in China at the end of the Revolution, Ren's curiosity and desire to travel led him away from home.

He immigrated to the United States in 1988 to teach at the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design, where he still teaches occasionally. A year later, Ren was hired to teach at the San Francisco Art Institute, where he received his M.F.A. in Painting. Since 1989, he has been teaching traditional oil painting and Chinese brush painting part-time at City College. He commutes twice a week in his 1995 Honda Accord from the home he shares with his 75-year-old mother in Union City.

Ren was once married to Feng Chen, a well-known calligrapher. The couple's 20-year-old daughter, Lena, is currently studying International Relations and East Asia Studies at Yale.

A respected artist, Ren's first book, "Poetry in Painting: The Work of Ming Ren," was published in 2006. He is currently working on his second coffee table book of prints, and the first-ever English textbook on Chinese brush painting.

In 2005, Ren showed his work at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Artists Gallery. At a recent exhibition at the JFK University Art Gallery in Berkeley, one of his paintings – "Snowing Moon," a 5-foot by 6-foot mixed media piece – was listed at \$30,000.

"His figure drawing is phenomenal," says Fred Kling, his colleague and friend. "[But] he's famous for his brush painting."

During the '80s, Ren created some of his better-known paintings by combining his interest in traditional Chinese and Western art. His symbolic realist oil pieces feature celebrities like Marilyn Monroe and other Western pop icons in traditional Eastern settings.

The work is aesthetically and technically different from his current work, which Kling describes as "more of a Jackson Pollock thinking."

Working on large canvases – some measuring 6 feet by 5 feet – Ren glues together custom-made pieces of heavy shuan. Some are mounted on giant wall scrolls that have been delicately attached to gallery walls. Each piece is layered with acrylics and ink mixed with a variety of mediums, including milk, salt, laundry detergent and other ingredients that he is reluctant to reveal.

"Happy accidents that occur in the way I work... fascinate and excite me," Ren says.

The spontaneity and quickness with which he works is reminiscent of the Contemporary Movement.

Richard Mandle, president of RISD, says, "Ming Ren creates fields of imagination... his pigments migrate, separate and merge to create compositions whose randomness establishes organic parallels to observed nature."

Elsa Marley, a noted fine artist, taught Ren a process that influenced his current work.

While in Shanghai, Marley collaborated on projects with other artists. She learned that "you have to trust the person you're working with. You have to let go of your ego."

Marley and Ren attached shuan paper and silks to canvases covered with raw pigments and experimental mediums.

They entered one of their pieces in the 2003 Florence Biennial International Exhibition of Contemporary Art. Out of nearly 800 exhibitors, they won the gold medal.

## Ming Ren has experimented with milk, salt, laundry detergent and other ingredients that he is reluctant to reveal.

From traditional Chinese brushwork comes discipline, where you must, "keep your body straight otherwise your chi goes zig zag... you have to control your chi," says Ren. From the West comes a variety of techniques and the will

to experiment and explore new methods of creating a narrative.

Doreen Coyne, director of the JFK Gallery says, "the work is an outgrowth of his process. He takes the best of east and west."

Though his contemporary paintings came about through experimenting on smaller pieces to get the technique down, they are each unique.

"If somebody can copy it, then I would consider him or her as my teacher," Ren says.

Through his work with the California College of the Arts and the San Francisco Art Institute, Ren has established an exchange program in which he takes American instructors to teach in China, and brings Chinese artists to America.

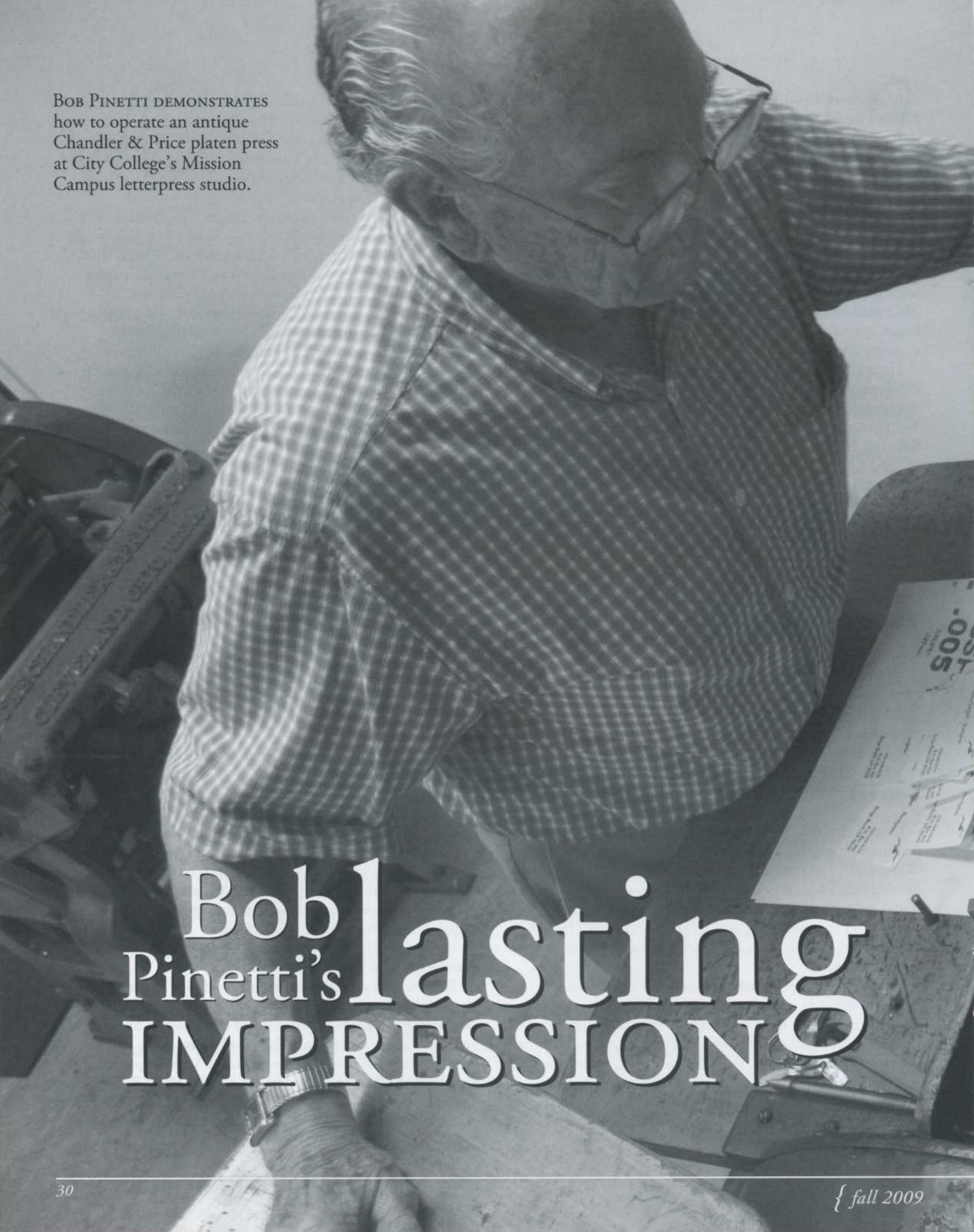
Ren also works with the Asian Art Museum. He teaches a class for the docents once a week about the history and technique of the brush painting collection.

"He's really loved by the Asian Art Museum," says John Ramirez, one of the docents.

The Revolution in China and his childhood in Hangzhou shaped Ren as an artist and teacher. It taught him discipline. Working hard to achieve the look of effortlessness has become a reflection of his artistic and educational roots.

In the forward to his first book, Roger Mandle, president of the Rhode Island School of Design, wrote: "Ming Ren's painting goes beyond the uttered word or brushstroke to portray the poetic qualities of nature in an extraordinarily broad manner."





BOB PINETTI DEMONSTRATES  
how to operate an antique  
Chandler & Price platen press  
at City College's Mission  
Campus letterpress studio.

# Bob Pinetti's lasting IMPRESSION





By Annemaree Rea

If you look in the San Francisco Yellow Pages, somewhere between “Priests” and “Prosthetics,” you’ll find “Printers” – just over 200 of them. A small number are letterpress printers, those stalwarts of the printing trade who have been churning out books, pamphlets and other printed matter since Johann Gutenberg invented moveable type more than 500 years ago.

On the second floor of the Mission Campus, tucked away in a quiet corner, students crowd around antique presses as an instructor sets type the old-fashioned way – by hand.

Master printer Bob Pinetti, who retired recently after nearly 40 years, used to preside over the classroom as though he owned the place. In a way he did.

As former chairman of training for the International Typographical Union, he knew printshops that were embracing new technologies and looking to unload equipment. A lot of it was donated to the school.

Surrounded by old printing presses, typecases, composing stones, racks of “furniture” and other printing accessories, Pinetti looks like a short-haired, slimmed down Ben Franklin, the printer he most admires.

Much of the equipment is of the same vintage. It’s as if you’ve traveled back in time. Unlike desktop printers, which are obsolete within a few years, these presses have been in use for more than 60 years. Many were manufactured more than a century ago. Two large treadle-operated platen presses, that operate like a clamshell opening and closing, stand like sentinels at the rear of the room.

While desktop printers are more user-friendly, 50 years ago letterpresses weighing more than a ton required training. It involves setting metal type, placing type on a press, inking, and rolling or pressing paper against it to form an impression.

In 2007, Pinetti helped move tons of old

PHOTOGRAPHS by Alice Pak



# { “He was the one to bridge the gap



BOB PINETTI, NOW RETIRED, RECENTLY MOVED TO North Beach, his favorite part of town.

letterpress equipment from the Ocean Campus to the new Mission Campus studio. More than 200 drawers of metal type, each weighing at least 25 pounds, needed to be Saran-wrapped before the movers would touch them, the octogenarian said.

At five-foot-six, 168 pounds, Pinetti opens a classroom closet and nimbly stands on a tall stool to reach a box of postcards and books. He likes to show off his former students' work.

He estimates that he's taught thousands of students, many of whom have gone on to successful careers in the field.

At 87, with nearly 75 years of experience in the trade, Pinetti has carried on this very San Franciscan tradition for most of his life. In 1940, when he graduated from Lincoln High School, printing was second only to shipping as the city's biggest industry.

There was a print shop on the second floor of nearly every produce market downtown, he said, and printing programs in six of the city's high schools. If you wanted a guaranteed job when you graduated, you learned hot-lead typesetting, composing and how to operate a printing press.

Pinetti, a first generation Italian-American, became a grandfather figure to his students before he retired. He still has the

energy of someone half his age.

As a teenager selling cooked crab outside his father's restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf, he sold custom business cards, which he printed on-the-spot using a portable letterpress printer. Fifty for a dollar.

His first full-time job was as "Second Printer" on the cruise ship *Lurline*, one of four passenger ships operated by Matson, which traveled from here to Long Beach and Hawaii. His job was to print a small daily newspaper and menus. Pinetti set the type, placing each letter individually onto a composing stick. Although it was a time-consuming process to build a page, it kept ocean-goers informed of ship activities.

When the ship reached port the rest of the crew remained on board while Pinetti was able to go ashore during the stopover. Of his time in Waikiki, he said, "I thought I'd died and gone to heaven." His sailing run ended in November of 1941.

A month later, Pinetti was job hunting in San Francisco when Pearl Harbor was attacked. There would be no more passenger ships sailing for some time.

When America declared war, Pinetti was told he wouldn't be drafted if he kept sailing.

"I knew if I enlisted I'd be killed the first day," he said. He joined the Merchant Marines and worked as an electrician until the end of the war. He shipped out to Singapore, Bombay, Guantanamo Bay and just about every island in the Pacific.

"Everyone was involved in the war effort," he said. When he wasn't delivering supplies to troops overseas, he was doing electrical work in the Richmond shipyards across the Bay.

"I would go home at night [after they had] laid the keel. I'd come in the next day and [the ship] was almost finished... It was overwhelming."

After the war was over, Pinetti returned home and married his best friend's sister, Ines Mangini.

Years later, they had two boys -- both of whom are now in their 50s. Although Pinetti has ink in his blood, his sons don't. One, a CCSF alum, is a marine pilot and member of the San Francisco Bar Pilots Association. The other is a senior vice president of the Kimpton Hotel Group, which includes the Sir Francis Drake and Triton in San Francisco.

In 1946, Pinetti bought a combination offset-letterpress print shop on Pine Street, where he and a partner published the *Polk-Gulch Times*, a local news and gossip newspaper with a circulation of 20,000. At the time, San Francisco had four



# between commercial and artistic printing..."

major newspapers, at least seven foreign language papers and weekly papers for every neighborhood.

The long hours left little time for other pursuits. Intent on spending more time with his family, he sold the business after six years.

Along the way, he learned to operate a Vandercook letterpress for "very demanding ad guys." He found the work fulfilling because it required such attention to detail.

"It was work you could be proud of," he said. He stayed in advertising for three decades. Prior to that, he hadn't worked more than two years in any one place.

During the '60s, the International Typographical Union recruited members who needed training to update their skills. Pinetti realized the industry was changing, so he decided to teach.

After a course in Colorado, he returned to the city and taught the old-timers how to avoid being automated out of their jobs. Retired 10 years from the ad shops, he was hired by the San Francisco Chronicle to train typesetters in ad layout, paste-up, negative- and plate-making. He was with the Chronicle for six years until 2007, when they cut their production staff down to 20. They originally had as many as 300 people in their production department.

Many printers in San Francisco know Pinetti.

"He was the one to bridge the gap between commercial and artistic printing," said local editor and printer John McBride.

The letterpress course that Pinetti introduced at City College has become hugely popular, says Jo Anne Bilodeau, assistant to the chair of the Graphics Department. "Letterpress is back in vogue," she said.

It's a classic look that's particularly well-suited for greeting cards, wedding invitations, business cards and any kind of craft printing.

On a recent tour of City College's printing facilities, Pinetti pointed out a collaborative project that his students produced – a series of themed books made by hand using a variety of techniques, from die-cutting to thermography to letterpress printing and basic bookbinding.

"I think computers got them interested," he said.

Unlike desktop or offset printing, letterpress is tactile. It's this quality – impressions made where metal type meets the paper – that artists and designers are drawn to.

Nathan Atkinson, Pinetti's successor at City College, notes that there are many graphic designers enrolled in his course (Graphics 92A - Letterpress). The class is still so popular, there's a waiting list to get in.

"They're sitting in front of a monitor all day," he says. "They've lost touch...they can't touch things anymore." These students want a hands-on experience.

Atkinson says he's seen many of his students finishing the course and going on to buy their own presses, installing them in their garages and starting their own businesses.

Pinetti's garage, once filled with old printing equipment, sits empty. He found a new home for it. He says he has a computer at home, but that he uses it only for writing letters.

It seems that after 68 years as a printer, Pinetti may finally be giving his fingers a rest.

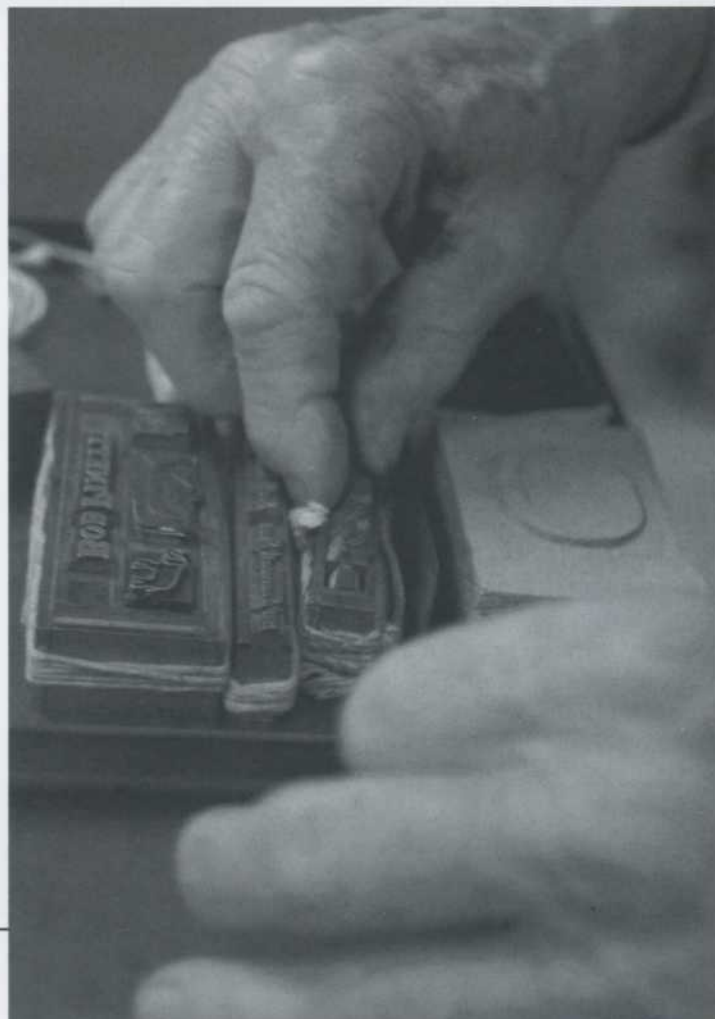
Leaning against the corner door of Room 207 on the Mission Campus, a vertical sign reads: "Printing." Inside, the classroom looks like a museum. But it's not. Students still use the old printshop equipment to learn the trade.

When three of Pinetti's former students entered the studio recently, he asked, "What are you guys doing here?"

"We missed you!" they replied in unison.

"Print that," Pinetti said, smiling.

PINETTI TIES LEAD TYPE TOGETHER  
with string before going to press.







# A Lifetime of Firsts

BURL TOLER (CENTER) POSES WITH the rest of the CCSF defense during his first season on the 1948 championship team.

PHOTOGRAPH BY Susan Boeckmann

## Burl Toler exceeded boundaries on and off the field

By Emily Daly and Dylan Gunther

As a father and a friend, Burl Toler was looked upon as a source of inspiration. When he died August 16, 2009 at the age of 81, his service filled every pew at St. Ignatius Church.

"We've never had that many people come to a funeral," said Father John Lo Schiavo, former president of USF and lifetime friend of Toler's.

Toler was used to a full house – as an All-American football player for a championship team; an NFL official for 24 years, including Super Bowl XIV; as a teacher and principal for over 17 years; and as a husband, father of six, and grandfather of eight.

Born May 9, 1928 in Memphis, Burl Toler moved to the Bay Area during high school. Beginning in 1948, he played linebacker on City College's championship football team. A few years later, he helped the University of San Francisco's team go undefeated, earning him a first-round draft pick for the Cleveland Browns. Unfortunately, a career-ending knee injury kept him out of the NFL. No one knows what Toler could've accomplished in the NFL had he not been injured; many believe he would have gone on to become a hall-of-famer just as three of his teammates did.

"But, he did the next best thing," said Ralph Thomas, Toler's teammate and friend at USF.

He became the NFL's first African American official in 1965. The accomplishment was groundbreaking, but it was also an honor.

"That's like Jackie Robinson," said Father Lo Schiavo. "If he hadn't opened the way, it would've been a long time before another African American had been able to referee."

Toler officiated for 25 years, including being head linesman for the 1982 AFC Championship Game known as the "Freezer Bowl," played under the coldest windchill in NFL history. His NFL career was highlighted in 1980 when he became the first black referee to officiate in a Super Bowl.

"America trusted Burl to call the game right," said his friend Hiawatha Harris at his funeral.

During his tenure in the NFL, he also worked on the Board of Trustees at USF and served as a commissioner for the San Francisco Police Department on a board of citizens appointed by the governor.

Years later, he taught at Benjamin Franklin Middle School and coached youngsters on how to play the game. He rose from teacher to principal, a first for an African American in the San Francisco school district. The school was renamed in his honor on October 22, 2006.



He received the Edward J. Griffin Education Award for his administrative work at Ben Franklin. Toler's devotion to his work was matched only by his loyalty to his family, his children remember.

"It was almost like winning the lottery as far as picking fathers go," said his son, Greg Toler. "He was my father... but also my friend."

Burl married his wife Melvia in 1952. They remained together until she passed away in 1991. They had six children and eight grandchildren. One grandson, Burl Toler III, continued the legacy when he was signed as a wide receiver by the San Jose Sabercats in 2006.

Besides Toler's influence on his grandson, he also had an impact on his teammates' lives. His friend, Ralph Thomas, came from a Catholic high school in Wisconsin, where he never remembered seeing a black person on campus. But that changed when he came to USF and met his teammates, Ollie Matson (a Chicago Cardinals first-round draft pick) and Burl Toler.

"That was really the first contact I'd had with any African American," said Thomas. "And there were no two finer gentlemen you could ever meet."

Thomas said his relationship with Toler was close. He was honored to sponsor his friend's conversion to Catholicism.

"Over the years I bragged my true claim to fame at USF was that I was Burl's godfather," said Thomas. "He was my very, very best friend. He was everybody's best friend, that's what I'll always remember and cherish about our relationship."

Toler's daughter, Susan, said, "He didn't judge people by what they looked like, but by who they were."

Besides his professional accomplishments, he inspired others in a more personal way. Toler said he was most proud of his degree from USF and his work as an educator.

"His students were his customers," said Susan.

At City College, where Toler played organized football for the first time, he began to make a name for himself. The 20-year-old from Memphis quickly stood out on the junior college's football team.

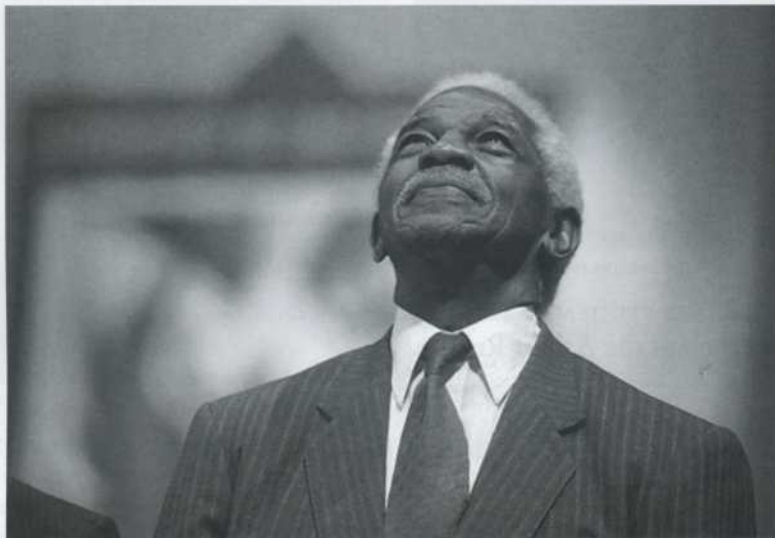
"He was a true linebacker," said Thomas. "There wasn't another linebacker in the country as good as him."

Toler transferred to USF on a football scholarship in 1950 and the following year the Dons' had an undefeated season. It

inspired the book "Undefeated, Untied, and Uninvited," which documented the team's refusal to play in the Orange Bowl if it meant their two black teammates couldn't participate.

The Dons' didn't hesitate to make the decision. "Why would we even consider leaving a family member behind?" asked Thomas.

"The team just thought the world of him," said Lo Schiavo. "They were truly a band of brothers."



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL CHINN/COURTESY OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

**BURL TOLER AT USF'S 147TH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT ceremony where he accepted his honorary degree.**

In 2000, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution stating that the team deserved acknowledgment for their stand against racial prejudice. And in 2008, the whole team was invited to the Phoenix, Arizona, Tostitos Fiesta Bowl as a salute to their actions 57 years before.

But in the Dons' case, the recognition of their actions meant little compared to the friendship that they were motivated by.

"The stand we took back then against racism was evidence of the solidarity we enjoyed," Thomas said.

After earning a BA in Science from USF in 1952

(and earning a master's in 1966), Toler was awarded USF's Alumnus of the Year award in 1995.

During the 2006 spring commencement he was awarded an honorary degree, and later that year he received the university's "Legend of the Hilltop" honor, recognizing him as one of the school's 75 top athletes.

In 2008 he was inducted into the Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame. He never strayed far from San Francisco, the place of his accomplishments.

"Toler enjoyed and loved this city," his oldest son Burl Jr. said at his funeral. "He respected this place and always wanted to do well."

Mayor Gavin Newsom recognized Toler's contribution to the city when he proclaimed Nov. 6, 2009 "Burl Toler Day." Toler became the first inductee to City College's Wall of Fame during a game dedicated to him the next day.

According to his son Greg, Toler considered the injury that kept him out of the NFL a blessing in disguise – something that allowed him to live out his life as much more than a football hero. Nothing could stop him from being a hero to those who knew him.

"He touched so many people," his daughter Susan said. "Like a patchwork quilt – people of all different shapes, colors, and sizes."





PHOTOGRAPH by Molly Oleson

MS. BOB SHOWS A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT A COURSE catalog during an outreach at the Ark of Refuge.

*...continued from page 11*

It inspired her to do outreach at agencies such as the Ark, and led her to transgender people living restricted lives due to safety issues.

"You tell them to get on a bus (and go up to campus), and you might as well be saying you're going to be taking a safari," she says.

So since Fall 2005, she has been dedicated to changing that by bringing the idea of school to them. Her work beyond campus includes outreach at the Asian and Pacific Islander Wellness Center, Larkin St. Youth Services, Trans Thrive, Dimensions Youth Clinic, and Tom Wadell Clinic. She's even worked with transgender prisoners at San Francisco City Jail.

"They want to talk about establishing some kind of future for themselves," Ms. Bob says. "I tell them that when they're clean and sober they should come to school."

Amber Gray, a transgender student, says she remembers a time when she was afraid to leave her Tenderloin neighborhood. She's now the Ark of Refuge Program Manager.

"People here are in everyday survival mode," she says. "They can't look past today."

Many have been bullied at school or are skeptical of large institutions.

"They have a lot of mistrust to overcome," Ms. Bob says.

Gray believes Ms. Bob makes the idea of going to college seem less intimidating and more exciting.

"It's changed a lot of people's lives," Gray says of the program. "If they can see themselves dedicating three months to going to school, they see possibilities."

And once they get there, she says, their world views open up.

"When you step on campus you just keep going," Gray says. "You don't want to stop."

Once transgender students enroll, Ms. Bob advises them and advocates for them. She fought for the gender-neutral bathrooms on campuses, and encouraged Admissions to include an option on application forms for students who don't identify as male or female.

She's also the contact person for gender-related harassment complaints. "It's usually a lack of sensitivity," she says of the cases reported.

Ms. Bob collaborates with the Health Education Department's Gender Diversity Project, which promotes the rights of transgender people by dispelling stereotypes that lead to discrimination and harassment. She is often a guest speaker at monthly sensitivity trainings where faculty and staff are given resources for working with the transgender community.

When transgender students reported being harassed by athletes in front of the library last semester, Ms. Bob contacted the athletic department. She stood in front of the entire football team dressed in drag.

She convinced them it "wouldn't rub off."

Then she arranged to have lunch with one of the coaches in the middle of campus, just to have a presence.

Before long, football players were saying hello to her.

"It really felt good," Ms. Bob says. "It felt like we had succeeded."

In addition to teaching Music Fundamentals, Classical Guitar, Music in American Culture and Music Appreciation, Ms. Bob writes a column for the publication *Transgender Tapestry*. She once wrote the "Regina Antiqua" (Latin for "Old Queen") column for the now defunct magazine *LadyLike*, and earned a reputation as a collector of photographs and newspaper clippings of female impersonators.

Her collection (some of which dates back to the 1860s), occupies a large part of her home in Oakland, which she shares with her partner of 17 years, Carol.

"If it weren't for her fashion sense I would look downright shabby," Ms. Bob says of her partner, who is also transgender.

Ms. Bob says time away from campus is spent preparing for classes, playing banjo and guitar with friends, and occasionally attending cultural events.

For a person who has already gone through a lot of transition, she still embraces change.

"I'm trying to cultivate femininity in every way... in ways of moving, ways of speaking," she says.

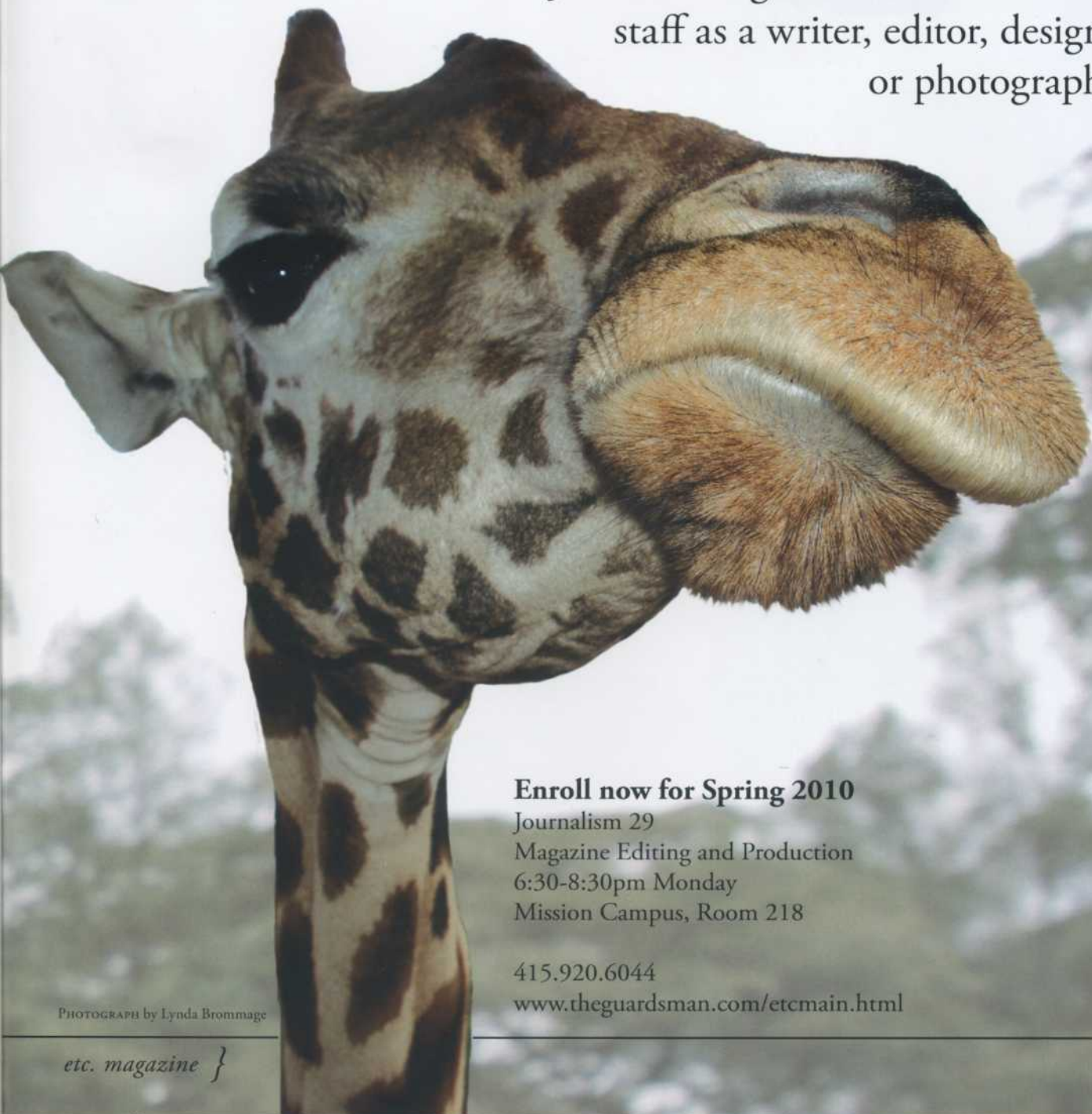
And though she hasn't had any surgery or hormone therapy, she says she may consider some form of medical intervention in the future.

"I see myself as an older, artistic, svelte woman," Ms. Bob says. "The older part? Got it. Artistic? Always have been. Svelte, I'm working on. And the last part? I may never get there, but I'm working toward it."



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*what about  
Mrs. Bob?*

**RAISING TEDDY**  
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**BACK FROM THE FRONT**  
A Marine's Memories of Iraq

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Of Life and Death